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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 31, 2021

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

COPYRIGHT ACT

The House resumed from April 15 consideration of the motion that Bill C-272, an act to amend the Copyright Act (diagnosis, maintenance or repair), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see you in the Chair, because discussing right to repair brings back memories of when I was a political staffer serving on the industry committee. I think you were serving on the industry committee at the time, about 10 years ago, when we were discussing another right to repair bill from the member for Windsor West, so the discussion of this issue brings back memories.

I appreciate the opportunity to continue with remarks I had been making previously; I had started a speech that I am now able to continue. I have six minutes left, I think. I am continuing a speech that I started earlier, and there has been an important development in my life since the first half of the speech, which was that I purchased a ride-on tractor for mowing my lawn, which will no doubt influence my reflections on right to repair, and I want to thank the member for Peace River—Westlock for giving me good advice on that purchase. It was the cheapest model available that I could find, but it is still worth more than the car I drive.

Previously, there was a bill put forward before the House by the member for Windsor West that was dealing with the issue of right to repair for vehicles specifically. I was a political staffer at the time working with the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, and other members who are still in the House were involved in that debate. There was this tension that always comes up around this question. On the one hand, there is the argument that people should have a right to repair their own property and they should have the right to access the information they need in order to allow something they own to continue to work and function. There are also concerns from the manufacturers' perspective, potentially, about things like re-

verse-engineering products and that, if they are sharing certain kinds of information, it could create problems for intellectual property that go beyond simply the question of repair.

There are competing considerations, but I think considerations that can also be well balanced. I support in principle the idea that people should be able to repair their own property. That is a reasonable expectation of somebody who owns a vehicle, a tractor, or farm equipment, etc. It is also a reasonable expectation, and one that I think is compatible with that expectation, that people not be able to reverse-engineer products and take advantage of access to repair codes and other information. How do we balance these considerations?

The way this was addressed in the previous Parliament, over 10 years ago, that dealt with right to repair legislation was that members passed the bill at second reading and while this issue was considered at committee, there was a great deal of discussion among stakeholders and it led to the creation of a voluntary agreement that facilitated information sharing. It was ultimately a voluntary agreement that all of the different players involved, the manufacturers as well as the repair associations, were happy to see proceed. That happened because members expressed their support in principle, but then also there was a good exploration of the issues and a reasonable meeting of the minds that happened and allowed for progress to take place.

I congratulate the member for Cambridge on bringing this item forward for discussion again. I think it is a worthy issue for discussion, especially since the scope of his bill goes beyond just talking about cars; it talks about a broader range of issues involving repair and equipment. I recognize the need for the discussion and the legitimacy of the principles at play. I am pleased to be supporting this bill at the second reading stage, and I look forward to the detailed work that is going to be done by the committee on that. Again, the Conservatives support the principle of people who have property they have purchased being able to repair it and being able to continue its functioning and not be unable to take the steps they reasonably need to take, themselves. We also recognize the intellectual property issues at play, which require seriousness and balance in our response to them.

I will be pleased to support the bill at this stage and look forward to the work the committee is going to be able to do.

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• (1110)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, whenever I have had the opportunity to address the House in person or from Longueuil over the past weeks and months, I have typically been unhappy about something. There are all kinds of issues and problems I am not happy about, things we are not moving fast enough on, such as housing, health and seniors. Today, however, I am relatively happy.

I think the bill before us now, Bill C-272, is a step in the right direction. I am pleased to speak to this issue this morning because it is kind of a personal one for me. I am an actor, so copyright issues are important to me. I am here to say that I support the bill because improper use of the Copyright Act to prevent people from fixing electronic devices is immoral. It is also expensive for consumers and has a terrible environmental impact.

Bill C-272 would amend the Copyright Act to ensure that it “does not apply to a person who circumvents a technological protection measure that controls access to a computer program if the person does so for the sole purpose of diagnosing, maintaining or repairing a product in which the computer program is embedded”. What immediately spring to mind are telephones, lawnmowers, washing machines, and even tractors.

The Copyright Act is intended to allow creators to earn a living from their art and to protect their work from being copied or used in ways they do not approve of. It is important legislation. As I said before, as an actor, I am keenly aware of the need to protect both artists' revenue streams and their rights to their creations, that is to say their art.

Curiously, the Copyright Act also applies to those who write computer programs, particularly when the work is protected from pirates by what is called a digital lock. The law prohibits breaking that lock to reproduce or alter the work without the consent of the copyright owner, which is good. However, since the Copyright Act also covers software, businesses have decided to use it to keep repair professionals from breaking the digital lock. That effectively renders many objects irreparable.

The vast majority of today's products have electronic components, so of course we see this everywhere, but many companies have included a digital device to prevent repairs from being made, unless the company has expressly provided the codes. According to those manufacturers, a repair person who overrides a digital lock to fix a phone, car or tractor without the company's consent is committing an offence under the Copyright Act. This is making it impossible to fix items that we own when they are broken or not working properly, unless we go to one of the company's dealers, and even then, the company has to agree to fix the item.

Companies often refuse to repair their own products, just so customers are forced to purchase new ones. This is what is known as planned obsolescence, which is a terrible source of waste and above all totally unnecessary. It is costly for consumers and obviously disastrous for the environment.

Take Apple as an example. That company has patented all the parts of its phones to ensure that no one can produce replacement

parts. That is no joke. It has also locked its operating software to prevent repair people from circumventing the locks, which would make them subject to prosecution under the Copyright Act.

If a consumer has a defective phone, the only way to get it fixed is to take it to an Apple store or an authorized Apple retailer. Even then, the company will fix only a very limited number of parts.

Consumers are often told their phone cannot be repaired and must be replaced because Apple opts not to do the repairs knowing that the consumer does not have the right to do repairs the company refuses to do. It is a kind of repair monopoly.

If a consumer has a problem with their smart phone and chooses to have an unauthorized person open it up to diagnose the problem, the consumer can no longer have it repaired and cannot even have it replaced under warranty because they had it repaired by someone else and that violates Apple's conditions. It is fascinating.

• (1115)

Incidentally, in the last quarter, Apple made a net profit of \$28 billion. Members should think about that for a second because planned obsolescence is a particularly unethical concept. The company is manufacturing a product knowing in advance that the product will ultimately break. The company then makes sure that the product cannot be repaired so that it can sell more of the product and make more money. That is unacceptable.

Companies are preventing consumers from repairing their items themselves and from paying someone a small amount of money to repair a product that costs hundreds of dollars. All of that is done with the goal of filling order books and lining shareholders' pockets. This aspect of consumer society is simply not compatible with environmental protection. In a finite world, we cannot encourage infinite consumption that cannot even be mitigated by re-use or repair. The need, and I want to emphasize that word, to protect the environment for future generations makes all acts and initiatives important, whether they be big or small.

This bill does not seek for the elimination of fossil fuels or the oil sands, nor does it seek the adoption of measures that would ensure that greenhouse gas reduction targets are met, even if those targets keep changing. However, that does not change the fact that this is an important bill. Every action truly counts. I encourage my colleagues to quickly pass this bill.

As I said, every action counts no matter how small. I would like to take a minute to remind my colleagues that we can do much more to combat planned obsolescence. For example, across the Atlantic, the European Union introduced a directive requiring its member countries to amend their laws to classify products according to their ability to be repaired. Since January, products in France have been labelled with their reparability index.

For the most part, electronics such as smart phones, computers and televisions, as well as household appliances such as washers, dryers or lawnmowers now display a score out of 10. This rating lets consumers know what options are available to them when the time comes to have a particular item repaired.

Such a measure obviously helps consumers make informed choices. It also makes businesses want to compete in an effort to manufacture more sustainable products, since consumers will finally know the sustainability of the product they are buying. Within the next two years, other European countries are also set to adopt measures similar to the ones taken by France.

The bill to amend the Copyright Act will address a significant loophole and resolve part of the problem of planned obsolescence. We need to do more. Solutions such as the one I just spoke about already exist. Planned obsolescence is a major problem in our society because it creates a lot of pollution. It is very important that we tackle greenhouse gas emissions, and therefore the bill is important.

According to ABI Research, 720 million cellphones are thrown away every year around the world. While people everywhere purchase their first cellphones, about 60% of the 1.2 billion units sold annually are purchased to replace discarded phones. If we do nothing to address planned obsolescence, just imagine what will happen when everyone or almost everyone has a smart phone.

Every year, between 30 million and 55 million tonnes of electronic waste is buried. That is disastrous. As a point of comparison, 55 million tonnes of electronic waste is more than 1,000 times the weight of the *Titanic*. That is unacceptable.

Therefore, it is urgent that we take action to protect our planet. Almost everyone agrees on that. We cannot go on this way. Let us leave cleaner air, clearer water and more fertile soil and not an immense mountain of waste to our children and grandchildren.

I invite my colleagues to quickly pass the bill. However, we must not stop there. We can do much more. For the future of humanity, every small step must immediately be followed by another.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to virtually rise in the House today to speak on this important bill. However, before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the tragic news we heard last week of the discovery of 215 children's bodies at the Kamloops Indian Residential School. I am saddened by this discovery and my prayers are with the Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc First Nation, as well as all indigenous communities across Canada.

I will now speak to the bill at hand. The increased pace of digitization of our economy and the use of software in more of our everyday consumer products has transformed the ownership and control consumers have over many purchases. Consumer products from kitchen appliances to cars, which were once only mechanical and electrical, are now embedded with software. These technological transformations can make products more useful and responsive for consumers. However, the software that controls the components of the products is protected by copyright. This reduces some abili-

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ties consumers have traditionally exercised, including the ability to repair their own purchases when they malfunction.

The Copyright Act provides protection for software to encourage innovation and investment. It further grants copyright holders the ability to use technological protection measures, also called TPMs or digital locks, to protect their software from access, unauthorized copying and infringement. TPMs were originally promoted as a tool to encourage creative industries to offer their work in digital form. TPMs are now being used broadly across the economy to protect software incorporated within products in industries such as manufacturing. While I believe in the importance of legal protection for TPMs, I also believe that the Copyright Act should provide exceptions to these protections when they harm the legitimate interest of consumers to maintain and repair the products they own.

Under current copyright law, it would be a violation for someone to circumvent a product's TPM for the purpose of repairing it. The Copyright Act already includes exceptions that permit TPM circumvention for a number of purposes, including ensuring interoperability of computer programs, conducting encryption research or unlocking a cellphone to change telecommunications services, to name a few examples. I believe adding a new exception to the Copyright Act permitting the circumvention of TPMs for the purpose of repair only makes sense.

The recent parliamentary review of the Copyright Act drew attention to this situation. Recommendation 19 of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology's 2019 report, entitled "Statutory Review of the Copyright Act", calls for measures to permit Canadians to circumvent TPMs allowed under copyright law for the purpose of repairing, maintaining and adapting their software-embedded devices. Facilitating repair is a multi-faceted public policy challenge that might require additional legislative action. However, I support referring Bill C-272 to committee because it proposes to address the one issue that is clearly in federal jurisdiction: the Copyright Act.

Bill C-272 would not solve all the issues faced by consumers regarding repair, but it is an important step in the right direction. I will vote in favour of referring Bill C-272 to committee because I believe that removing the copyright-related restriction to repair will make any further measures introduced by provinces and territories to support repair more effective.

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If Bill C-272 is referred to committee for further study, we as parliamentarians must work to ensure that all information and evidence comes to light on the issue of copyright and repair. This evidence would ensure that the TPM exception for the purpose of repair that Parliament ultimately decides on will be the best possible option. It will be an exception that balances all the varied considerations and interests that come into play on this issue.

• (1125)

We must ensure the exception serves the interests of Canadians who want more choice and ease to make repairs, but we must also ensure the exception has the appropriate safeguards to preserve the safety and security of electronic products.

Removing the copyright-related restriction to repair may enhance competition for independent repair shops. To support the post-pandemic economic recovery, we need any boost to entrepreneurship we can get.

Making it easier for consumers to repair their products, as proposed by Bill C-272, could also contribute to reducing electronic waste. A United Nations report found Canada was responsible for 725,000 tonnes of electronic waste in 2014.

A study commissioned by Open Media found that 75% of Canadians have discarded or replaced a broken device because of a repairable issue. That study also found that one-third of respondents claimed that the repair of the product was prohibitively expensive, forcing them to buy a new one.

All electronic waste is not because of the copyright law; however, a TPM exception such as the one proposed in Bill C-272 would facilitate the repair of products as opposed to their replacement. This could only help toward an overall reduction in electronic waste produced in Canada.

Finally, it is my hope that a TPM exception for the purpose of repair, such as the one proposed in Bill C-272, would help historically marginalized groups to gain better access to repair services and have more repair services become available in rural and remote communities.

In closing, I am in favour of this important change to the Copyright Act in support of repair. I look forward to further discussion on this to make sure we do not introduce unintended consequences at the same time.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to stand in the House of Commons to address the right to repair legislation that we have before us.

Last week, I was on the phone with Mr. Jackson, who has a John Deere tractor. One of the things he was concerned about was the amount of electronics in the tractor and his inability to access the electronics and repair them. We had an extensive conversation about the right to repair. It was interesting.

One of the things he brought up was that a lot of data is put in by the farmer. Modern farming technology uses GPS coordinates, seed rates, soil samples and all kinds of things. That information is put into the tractor to make the calculations, when he is seeding a new crop, of how much fertilizer to put on, what speed to operate at,

what the seed rate is and how many pounds of seed per acre he is using. All of these kinds of things are included.

Basically, that is the farmer's intellectual property. That is how he put it as well. It is his seed recipe. It is his farming recipe. To get the tractor and seeder to implement his recipe, he has to enter a lot of data. His concern is that while he is unable to look at and get into the software of the tractor he owns, the tractor is uploading most of the data that he is inputting back to the manufacturer.

Back when that technology was first coming out, he was programming the seeder to do all the seeding and fertilizing. Today, when someone buys a new tractor or seeder, they can press a button to say they are seeding barley and the machine does the set-up for them. It provides someone with a default mix. The seeder and the tractor manufacturers have used the data input by farmers over the last few decades to come up with a generic seed mix that works for folks. The manufacturers can say they have had 100,000 farmers input data into their system.

There does not seem to be a give-and-take in that respect. While farmers seem to put in a lot of data, and the manufacturers work on building programs to allow that, if a farmer's machine breaks down they have to wait for the manufacturer to show up and then they have to pay that manufacturer. Manufacturers have farmers over a barrel. Farmers have 24 days to get their seed in the ground, and cannot really afford three days down.

That was Mr. Jackson's big push in the conversation we had around the right to repair. It was an interesting conversation. That whole story speaks to the balancing act the government has to do in governing this relationship between consumers and manufacturers. Increasingly, of the things that we buy and the technology that we buy, the things we can see and touch are not what is valuable. It is the software that is making those things go.

In talking about the right to repair, my washing machine broke down the other day. I have four children at home, so a washing machine is an important piece of equipment. The computer board that controls the motor went out. I ended up getting a new control board, but the ability to repair those things is helpful and saves time. In an afternoon, I had it torn apart, put back together and operating again.

Regarding the right to repair legislation, off the top of my head, I think the term comes from the agriculture sector and tractors, but also from the automotive sector. When the government was bringing in emissions controls on cars, that technology was expensive. The manufacturers balked at it to a fair extent. Once it was brought in, they said it was proprietary technology and they wanted to maintain control of it. They did not want to lose it. There were a lot of defences put up around that technology.

The government, however, brought in right to repair legislation saying it was emissions-related. No matter where that vehicle is in the world, we need to be able to have those emissions systems repaired.

• (1130)

Over time, we have seen protocols come into place, OBD1 and OBD2, OBD standing for onboard diagnostics. Every vehicle has a connector under the dashboard. It must be within 30 centimetres of the centre line. It is a very standardized connector. I think there were 27 pins, but now it uses about three or four of them. There is a standardized protocol for computer communication. It does not matter which manufacturer is building a diagnostic tool, it has the exact same plug and it communicates with the vehicle. The right to repair legislation has mandated that.

In the 1980s and 1990s, vehicle scanners used 50 different connectors. Today, there is one and there is a standardized protocol for everyone. That is because of the right to repair legislation that came in generations ago.

Automotive aircraft has probably led the way in terms of that kind of technology, but now we see that same kind of computerized technology, which was a challenge for the automotive industry in the 1980s and 1990s, in every area of industry, whether it is a washing machine, cellphone, tractor or the coffee pot. They have computer programming, and they connect to phones.

Recently my dad got a new garage door opener. It connects to the phone. It is Wi-Fi and all that kind of cool stuff. Increasingly, we are dealing with this and we need to communicate with it. In some areas, some manufacturers are very open with their programming and how it works. In other areas, they are very closed with it. That is the reality.

Currently, I am in the frustrating process of switching over my iPad. Apparently my iPad is no longer serviced by Apple. I was talking with the IT folks, telling them that I liked this iPad. The one I am going to get is significantly larger and bulkier and I will have to download all the apps again, and get used to a new device. I am not big on change.

I asked if I could keep the one I had and was told no, because the software was no longer being updated and it would become a security risk. As the hackers get better and better, my device would not be able to compete with them. Therefore, I have to go to a new device. The right to repair would allow a third party to do the updates and maintain them.

There is a definite balancing act that would come with the bill. I know I will be interested to hear what the witnesses have to say in committee, if this bill gets to committee. That is always a challenge. Increasingly, when we buy equipment, we are not so much buying the hardware part, but rather the software and the technology that comes with it. Most modern, large construction equipment is tied 100% back to the factory. It gets data from every input that goes into that machine. There has to be that relationship. When we purchase an item, we then feed that item data and that data often goes back to the manufacturer and the manufacturer either sells the data or uses it to create the next generation of that same item.

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As we go to automation, the data people put into a machine will be used in the automated version of that machine that comes out. There has to be a give and take. If the companies use our data, we ought to be able to repair older technology, older data.

I am pleased to see this bill come forward. I look forward to supporting it going to committee, and I look forward to the discussion that will happen there.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-272. When I saw that this bill had to do with the Copyright Act, I figured I was right in my element. As a songwriter and composer, I speak on behalf of thousands of my peers, and I was pleased to see that we would finally be able to debate the importance of creators, who, in a way, are such a big part of our everyday lives. They entertain our minds and hearts, inspire our dreams and stir our emotions, and challenge us to reflect on our very existence. They create the music that fills our ears with words and messages that influence our priorities and social choices. They play a huge part in how our future progresses and unfolds. I would be remiss if I had not at least mentioned this.

When I read this very important bill introduced by our colleague opposite, I obviously thought it was about something else. It is not at all what I had imagined. This bill does not have to do with protecting copyrights for songs, theatre, music, writing or productions. I want my artist and creator friends to know that I will fight for that as well, because there is a lot to be done in this area, and our creators are suffering financially because this government has been slow to introduce legislation.

That said, let us get back to the bill. The purpose of the Copyright Act is to allow creators to earn a living from their art and to protect their work from unauthorized copying or use. This may come as a surprise, but, as I just recently learned, the Copyright Act also applies to software developers, which brings me to this very important Bill C-272.

Contrary to the fundamental principle of copyright law related to author remuneration further to universal usage, as is the case with songs, for example, the act does not apply when it comes to a refrigerator, washer or dryer or to computer equipment.

The bill therefore proposes that the person circumventing the technological protection measure controlling access to a computer program for the sole purpose of diagnosing, servicing or repairing a product into which it is embedded should not be subject to the current Copyright Act and should not be guilty. That is why the Bloc Québécois supports this bill. We appeal to common sense, and when something makes sense, we get behind it.

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Incidentally, major nuances in the current act absolutely must be considered and corrected as well. When a work is protected from piracy with a digital lock, the act prohibits breaking the lock to reproduce or alter the work without the copyright owner's consent, and that is fine.

The problem is that software is also covered by the Copyright Act, so many companies use the act to prevent repair people from breaking the digital lock, and that makes many devices irreparable. When a consumer product contains electronic components, as most products do these days, many companies include a digital mechanism to prevent repairs from being made unless the company has expressly provided the codes. According to these manufacturers, a repair person who overrides a digital lock to fix a phone, car or tractor without the company's consent commits an offence under the Copyright Act. I do not even know what to say.

That makes it impossible to fix an item that belongs to us, is broken or is not working properly, unless we go to one of the company's dealers. Another problem is that the company has to agree to repair the product. They often refuse, which forces us to buy a new product. That is called planned obsolescence, and it is a terrible financial and environmental waste. It is environmentally disastrous.

Let us look back in time. I do not have to look very far to find examples. My family never wanted for anything. My parents fell in love with a big house by the river and transformed it into a small hotel. To do this, my father and grandfather had to sell their schooner, with some regret, to finance the purchase of the house. I am sharing this story because it allows us to gain a better understanding of what we are talking about today. Times have changed, but have they done so for the better? Not always.

Before running the hotel, my father and grandfather were schooner captains on the St. Lawrence. The role of these invaluable schooners was to deliver goods to the north shore, since, at the time, roads and railroads had not yet reached this area. For north-ers, as my father called them, these schooners, these boats that people built and owned, were of the utmost importance. On the St. Lawrence, many of these schooners sailed from Montreal to Sept-Îles, and from there on all the way to St. Pierre and Miquelon.

● (1140)

Their arrival was quite the event, because everyone awaited the delivery of some coveted item, be it sugar or flour, farming implements to ensure their food self-sufficiency or, of course, a refrigerator, a toaster or an electric stove, for those villagers who were lucky enough to have electricity.

It was therefore essential that all of these appliances have a long life expectancy, since they were not easy to get and supply was never assured. I think members would be happy to see a nice picture of some schooners. There is a bit of a glare, but I believe—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. I must interrupt the member. We greatly appreciate the photo she is showing us, but the hon. member knows that members are prohibited from using props in the House.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: It is timeless, Madam Speaker. I apologize. Compare this situation to what is happening today.

When I was just six, I remember my father buying a used dishwasher for our small hotel. He told me that he was buying a second identical one that was out of order so he could repair the first one if it ever broke down. I will not share how old I am, but believe it or not, that dishwasher has survived my dad. It is still working, and I swear that we have not found a better replacement. Obviously and fortunately, it is not subject to any code of obsolescence, or we would have been fined many times over under the legislation. Since this appliance is still fit for purpose and generally meets commercial standards in terms of water temperature for disinfection, we are keeping it and repairing it. Most importantly, it is not polluting the planet.

This story illustrates what Bill C-272 seeks to correct. The Bloc Québécois thinks it is an interesting bill that confirms that we have the right to repair and have repairs done to our belongings. Repair technicians, be they mechanics, computer experts or former schooner captains cum hotel operators, will no longer be liable for copyright infringement.

This bill will be especially helpful in the regions, where companies often do not have dealers, making it downright impossible to repair goods. By correcting a provision in the Copyright Act that manufacturers were using to prevent their products from being repaired, the bill gives substance to the right to repair our own belongings. This will go a long way in protecting the environment, which cannot take any more of the hundreds of thousands of tonnes of scrap metal, computer equipment and cellular devices, refrigerators and toasters that have keep piling up. The life span of those items could have been extended were it not for this egregious provision in the act, which is more about money than about common sense or the environment.

The planet is making a green shift that is cannot be denied, and the future of the world absolutely depends on it. Perhaps this legislation will force companies to return to making devices that last. They might be more expensive to manufacture or purchase, but they will be more durable and therefore less polluting. Bill C-272 is a step in the right direction to force companies to adopt this approach, and the Bloc Québécois supports it.

● (1145)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, do we have the right to fix the things we buy, or do we have the obligation to bring those things back to the person who sold them to us and pay them to fix them for us? That is a long-standing question.

Many sellers build into their business model or their engineering plans a system that requires buyers to come back to pay for maintenance and repair at the place they bought the product or service. This can generate a stable stream of income for the seller and also allow the seller to continue to improve his or her products. On the other side, it prevents the buyer from shopping around and finding a better deal for repairs. There is a conundrum.

Sellers typically use two different ways to maintain their exclusive rights over the repair of products. One way is to build it right into the warranty or into the sales agreement that, for example, buyers can buy an automobile at a set price, but for the warranty to apply, buyers must bring it back to the seller and the seller alone for servicing. They can write into the contract, or the purchase agreement, that, if buyers want to buy this tractor, the seller will offer this original price, but customers are obliged by contract to give them the contracts to repair it. That is one way, through the use of contractual arrangements.

The other way is through technological protection measures. This is a particularly new phenomenon in the case of most products because, 30 or 40 years ago, those products did not have a lot of digital technology baked into them that could be encrypted or made exclusive through coding techniques. Today, almost everything we buy has some sort of a technological component to it. The future of automobiles, washer and drying machines, toaster ovens, basically anything we buy will mean less about the hardware, the tin, iron or aluminum in it, and more about the technology that operates it. Therefore, businesses have become very clever in embedding technological protection measures that encrypt the ability to maintain and repair the equipment.

There are two major extreme positions on what to do about this tension between the buyer who wants to repair his own product or the seller who wants to repair it for him. I will go through them very quickly. On the one hand, some argue that the government should force sellers to stop using technological protection measures or exclusivity clauses in sale and maintenance agreements. On the other hand, some argue that the status quo should continue, which forces buyers to respect technological protection measures and continue to go back to the seller in order to have repairs and maintenance done. Both of these solutions require government forcing one side on the other.

I believe in the free enterprise system where government applies as little force as humanly possible. Having read Bill C-272, right of repair, that the member for Cambridge has offered, I conclude that he is of the same view. His bill neither bans technological protection measures nor bans efforts by buyers to circumvent those measures. What he simply does with the bill is that it would legalize the practice of developing technologies to get around those technological protection measures so that buyers have the ability to try and repair a product for themselves.

For example, if someone were to buy a tractor and the tractor manufacturer put in a technology that prevented the buyer upgrading and maintaining that tractor, under the law today, the buyer could not buy a circumvention product that will allow them to get around the protection measure.

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• (1150)

That is the way the law is written under the Copyright Act in section 41 today. If one does that, one is breaking the law. However, the bill proposes to remove that prohibition, so the manufacturer of the tractor could still put in a protection to prevent the buyer from maintaining the tractor themselves, but the buyer would have the legal right to buy another product that would allow them to get around that technological protection.

In other words, the bill would basically open the matter up to buyers and sellers to sort out how they are going to arrange their contractual agreements on their own. It would continue to allow companies to put in place measures to try to retain their exclusive right to repair the products they sell, but it would also allow the customer to try to get around and circumvent those protections. I believe this is the right solution, because we should leave, as much as possible, decisions in commerce to the buyers and sellers involved and minimize the involvement of government in between their voluntary decisions.

For example, if a car dealership wants to write in a requirement that a car buyer must come back to the dealership for maintenance as a condition of the warranty, that should be legal. However, if the car buyer does not want to follow that edict, he can go and buy a car somewhere else. That is the genius of the free market system.

A buyer can say, "I do not want to be stuck going back to the dealership for maintenance. I want to go to Jane's Mechanics because she does a better job. I am bringing my car to her, and if the dealership is not going to allow my warranty to stand when she maintains my car, then I will not buy the car from that dealership. I will go to another dealership where they do not have that requirement as part of their warranty."

This allows the buyer to make an informed decision about the trade-offs involved when purchasing a product, whether it is a smart phone, an automobile, a washer and dryer, or a farm tractor, the buyer will be able to decide whether or not he or she will buy a product knowing that the seller has a requirement for a product to be maintained at the seller's business.

At the same time, if the seller wants to put some kind of technological method to prevent others from maintaining and repairing the product, well, he or she can do that. There is nothing in this proposed law that would prevent them from doing that. However, if the bill passes, the state would not enforce that technological protection, and I believe that is as it should be.

We should live in a free and open market system where people get ahead by having the best product rather than the best lawyer, and where the voluntary exchange of work for wages, product for payment and investment for interest allows everyone to do well by doing good, which is the genius of the market system. If someone has an apple and wants an orange, and I have an orange and want an apple, we trade, and we still have an apple and orange between us but we are both better off because we each have something worth more to us than what we had before.

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What is true of that simple transaction of apples and oranges is also true in more complicated products, such as software-enhanced agricultural equipment, smart phones or other devices. We, as consumers, do our research. We find out the terms involved in buying a given product, and then we decide for ourselves. If we do not like the arrangement that the seller has put into the purchase agreement, then we shop elsewhere.

I congratulate the member for Cambridge. I believe he has found the optimal solution in federal law to allow buyers of goods and services to try to maximize their utility when buying a product, and he removes unnecessary intervention by the state so that the buyers and sellers can do commerce and achieve the best possible outcome for themselves.

• (1155)

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-272, and I am excited to see this bill will come up for a vote very soon. I became interested in this topic because of how many aspects of our lives that it touches. It touches everything from agriculture and the food we eat, to the environment and how we divert waste away from landfills, to consumer rights and allowing people to do the things they should be able to do with the goods they purchase.

I hope this legislation also kicks off a deeper conversation about the right to repair. This issue is non-partisan and spans the concerns of urban and rural citizens, the young and the old, those who are tech savvy and those who are technophobes. It impacts all of us. I am pleased to see the positive response Bill C-272 has garnered from all parties, and I hope that an in-depth discussion at committee will follow.

Bill C-272 addresses some concerns that have become more frequent over the past decade, concerns that the Copyright Act is being used and interpreted in areas far beyond its scope. In particular, these concerns focus on the provisions of copyright that are actually able to prevent the repair of digital devices and systems, even when nothing is being copied or distributed. As digital technology around us has become less expensive, it has become more integrated into our daily lives, and the Copyright Act governs the software that is found in these systems.

As an example, the technology has not changed dramatically in refrigerators over the past few decades, but now you can get a fridge with a computer inside or digital touch screens on the front. That computer, more specifically the onboard software, is protected under the Copyright Act. That computer runs and manages the refrigerator and the onboard systems.

However, a manufacturer could choose to not allow the repair or replacement of a filter, compressor, or some other part without a specific code, password, or permission entered into the system. They may do this to prevent outsiders from making repairs, to ensure only their approved technicians make the repairs or to prevent the installation of aftermarket parts. However, if someone makes that repair on their own and breaks the technological protection measures in place to force it to accept the repair, they could be violating the Copyright Act, and they could be charged with breaking a federal law.

This need for repair is even more critical for people in rural or remote locations as they likely do not have quick or easy access to dealerships or manufacturers. These technological protection measures, or TPMs, can inadvertently prevent repairs, and they can shut out independent repair shops and home DIY repairs. They can even stop repairs after the company has gone out of business because they would still be breaking the TPMs, even if there are literally no other options for repair. That goes against everything that Canadians understand instinctively when they purchase something. Bill C-272 works to prevent these kinds of issues by carving out a specific and very limited allowance for consumers to circumvent a TPM, but only for the purpose of diagnosis, maintenance or repair.

None of these copyright protections are an issue with respect to repairs, and the spirit of the Copyright Act is not intended to speak to the repair of physical devices at all. Interpreting it this way is wildly outside the scope of the intent of copyright, and the legislation is out of date and misused as a result. The circumvention of TPMs discussed and allowed under Bill C-272 are only for repair, maintenance or diagnosis. Any other circumvention would remain illegal under the Copyright Act.

So far I have had the opportunity to hear from constituents, people across Canada and internationally who are all interested in seeing this bill passed. I thank them for their support.

I would also like to thank my staff for all of their hard work on this bill, especially that of Andrew Cowie, without whom we would not be speaking about this today.

My thanks to the hon. members for their debate today and in the first hour. I am also happy to discuss any changes requested by committee, changes that could strengthen the bill and its impact.

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 12:01, the time provided for debate has expired. Accordingly, the question is on the motion.

[Translation]

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded vote or that the motion be adopted on division, I invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 2, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from April 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy), be read the third time and passed.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the House for this opportunity to continue my remarks on Bill C-6.

[English]

I am a member of the justice committee, where many witnesses stated that we need to clarify the definition of conversion therapy in this bill. We heard over and over from lawyers that the definition is overbroad and imprecise and the bill lacks clarity, and from faith leaders like Cardinal Collins, who is a spiritual leader to two million Canadians, that it goes beyond the stated goal of banning coercive therapies. Other witnesses testified that good-faith conversations from caring counsellors literally saved their lives and helped them sort themselves out with support, time and no presupposed or preferred outcomes.

Given all the testimony we heard, much of which I referenced when I spoke previously, why not clarify the language of the bill? Why not specify that good-faith, non-coercive conversations would not be subject to criminal penalty? Why not? It is because the current Minister of Justice claims it would be redundant to do so. Redundant? Really? When is clarity so fervently called for by so many witnesses ever redundant? Why not give the comfort sought if it is implied, as the minister has suggested? The simplest answer is often the right one. The minister and the Liberal government do not want to give that comfort, do not want to give that protection.

This bill calls for criminal sanctions that could land Canadians in jail for five years. It is our duty as parliamentarians to draft precise legislation for judges and for all Canadians. Criminal law should have the highest threshold against confusion and ambiguity.

One of my daughters is a school counsellor. I want to ensure that she and the thousands of other hard-working counsellors across this country can continue to have safe conversations with students without violating the law.

It is an easy fix. Conservatives put forth a simple amendment to add a “for greater certainty” clause to the definition of conversion therapy. Our amendment mirrored the wording on the Department of Justice’s own website so that teachers, school counsellors, pastoral counsellors, faith leaders, doctors, mental health professionals and friends and family could provide support, without fear of criminal sanction, to persons who seek their counsel and who are struggling with their sexual orientation, sexual feelings or gender expression and identity.

An explanation given by a Liberal member at committee was that the list in our amendment stating “such as...teachers, school counsellors”, etc. offends the principle and statutory interpretation that the inclusion of some means the exclusion of others. As a former trial lawyer and administrative law judge, I can say that lists were always helpful to me in interpreting and applying the law. As for

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the canon of construction *expressio unius est exclusio alterius*, it simply does not apply where a list includes a prefix like “such as”. “Such as” means that the list is not exhaustive.

This is pretty basic stuff. Why does the Liberal government not stand by its own justice website? Why did it change its wording? This is the Liberals playing “gotcha” politics with real lives and real struggles, again, trying to force members to vote against this bill because of its lack of precision to later falsely claim that those who voted against it are therefore in favour of coercive conversion therapy. It is intentionally insulting and beneath the dignity of this House. By erasing all confusion, our amendment would have erased all doubt and garnered widespread support.

One last concern is that as of the final justice committee meeting before clause-by-clause consideration back in December, members were told that 260 written submissions were still being translated, and they were not available until after we voted on amendments. To ignore them is disrespectful and runs counter to our democratic values. It may have altered the very outcome of our clause-by-clause deliberations.

It is my hope that having digested these briefs in the intervening months, we, on both sides of the aisle, will recognize the importance of condemning harmful practices in a clear and targeted way. Let us reduce suffering and provide acknowledgement by banning coercive conversion therapy, but not increase suffering by ignoring so many briefs and witnesses.

We should love and look out for all Canadians: no Canadian left behind. I challenge the government to clarify the language in this bill, or at least be honest with Canadians about the intent behind it. Let us leave out hurtful and unnecessary politicization and welcome inclusion.

● (1205)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, while I normally have a good relationship with the member for South Surrey—White Rock, I am disappointed with her remarks today.

I want to draw her attention to the “for greater certainty” clause that was added to the definition in proposed section 320.101. It states, “For greater certainty, this definition does not include a practice, treatment or service that relates to the exploration and development of an integrated personal identity without favouring any particular sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.”

How is this a vague definition that would somehow prevent counsellors from talking to kids about sexual orientation and sexual identity? It simply says that providing a supportive and affirming conversation is not covered by this bill.

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Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I have a lot respect for my colleague. We have worked on many files together.

I want to be clear that I am against the practice of coercive therapies or conversion therapy. I do not agree with it. The member and I are both on the justice committee. Most of the witnesses, and it did not matter where they were from, were against that practice. What they wanted was real clarity, not an overly broad or imprecise definition, on what this means exactly, and they did not feel it was in this bill. Witness after witness, whether they be people who have explored this or lawyers studying the legislation, called for greater certainty, and that is what Conservatives are calling for, including the definition as set out on the justice website and in our amendment.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be honest. When I hear Conservatives say they are against conversion therapy but the definition is vague, that rings hollow. All that suggests is that they are trying to cover up. They say they are against it but the definition needs to be stronger. They are basically saying they are against a different version of what they believe conversion therapy to be, not what survivors have been saying it actually is.

The member did not answer the previous question. The member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke specifically asked why the member for South Surrey—White Rock considers the definition he read out vague when he went into detail describing the definition in the bill. Can she answer his question?

• (1210)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I would first like to say that I find the way that question was put deeply insulting and unnecessary in parliamentary debate, which is something we often see from the member. This is not the time to play these kinds of games. These are people's lives. People are suffering. I am on the justice committee, and I listened to the witnesses; the member did not.

When listening to the testimonies, we at committee heard real suffering, but it was suffering by more than one category of person. We heard suffering from people who had undergone coercive therapies that they felt had hurt them deeply, perhaps for life, but we also heard from witnesses who said that good-faith conversations by counsellors or faith leaders had actually saved their lives. One has to have some balance when looking at any piece of legislation in this House.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, whenever I hear anything about conversion therapy, I find it really upsetting, because sexual orientation is not a choice people make. I did not choose to be heterosexual any more than homosexual individuals chose their orientation. That is how we were born, it is in our genetic makeup; we got it from our parents.

If someone is struggling, it is only natural they seek psychological support, but do people really want a conversion? Do they really want to change their genetic makeup? How is this possible without psychological consequences, without anxiety and depression?

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I am not sure there was a question. I was very clear that I am against coercive conversion therapy. I have said that from the very beginning. I am just looking for greater clarity in the bill. To suggest that I am for this practice is erroneous.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have a speech in front of me this morning, because, like my colleague, I am very emotional and find this topic very upsetting.

I am pleased to rise today at third reading stage to speak to Bill C-6, which amends the Criminal Code with regard to conversion therapy. I think that there needs to be a consensus on this bill to give LGBTQ+ people the respect and protection they deserve. Equality for all is a fundamental value in Quebec, and I hope it is in the rest of the country as well. It is an inalienable right.

Practices that deny the existence of a person's core identity must be condemned. It is 2021. Historically, Quebec has been a leader in human rights protection. The Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms has recognized sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination since 1977, and the PQ justice minister got the National Assembly of Quebec to legalize same-sex marriage in 2002, when it instituted civil unions.

The bill that we are debating today proposes to amend sections of the Criminal Code in order to create offences related to the practice of conversion therapy. The term "practice" is very important here. This bill is identical to Bill C-8, which was introduced in March 2020 and died on the Order Paper when Parliament was prorogued. I hope that Bill C-6 will be passed by all members of the House in this 43rd Parliament, because we cannot afford to waste any more time.

What is conversion therapy? It is a practice, treatment or service designed to change a person's sexual orientation to heterosexual or their gender identity to cisgender, or to repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or any behaviour deemed abnormal. That is appalling.

I want every member to put themselves in the shoes of a vulnerable person, if only for a few moments, and imagine just how much this can violate their identity and how much distress it can cause. I find it inconceivable that this type of treatment is still being used today in an attempt to please parents or any organization and obtain their approval. For goodness' sake.

In Quebec, respect for each person's gender identity and sexual orientation is a value that the practice of conversion therapy violates. In our society that is so inclusive and respectful of human rights, or so I hope, who are we to judge what is good for a person and to try to convince them to be otherwise?

As experts are saying, conversion therapy is pseudoscience. Not only is it dangerous and degrading, but, as many studies have shown, it does not work. According to the World Health Organization, conversion therapy practices “represent a serious threat to the health and well-being of affected people”. According to the Canadian Psychological Association, “[c]onversion or reparative therapy can result in negative outcomes such as distress, anxiety, depression, negative self-image, a feeling of personal failure, difficulty sustaining relationships, and sexual dysfunction”. That is very serious.

• (1215)

Conversion therapy has already been banned in five Canadian provinces and one territory: Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Yukon. The cities of Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary have banned it as well. Around the world, Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, Fiji, Germany, Malta, Switzerland and Taiwan have all banned this type of therapy, as have more than 20 states and 80 cities in the U.S. Conversion therapy does, sadly, happen in Canada, but it is done behind closed doors. When I tell my constituents, they are surprised to hear that this practice still exists. We must speak out against these types of therapy and take action.

I would like to talk about the high-profile case of Gabriel Nadeau.

Gabriel was a member of a Pentecostal Protestant community and underwent conversion therapy three times.

I want my colleagues to feel what I did when I heard his story, so I will quote Gabriel. He said:

Four people physically held me down while the “prophet” shouted into my ears for 30 minutes, calling for the demon to get out, and they made me drink “holy olive oil”.

He added:

Everyone around me was saying that my sexual orientation could be changed. I tried everything...but of course nothing was successful. I had a breakthrough between the ages of 18 and 19.... Now, I accept my orientation and am proud to be gay.

It is hard to imagine everything he went through.

The members of his group believed that homosexuality was a malevolent spirit, a demon. Gabriel said he was aware of that and believed it himself. Exorcism was one of the therapeutic techniques used.

He went on to say:

I think that the hardest part for me, harder even than the exorcism, was the self-rejection that followed, the feeling of being completely disgusted by myself, wanting to change completely, and being so desperate every day.... It was truly awful.

Gabriel Nadeau also added:

I found self-acceptance, and I realized that I didn't always have to conform to what other people wanted or thought, when it came to my sexuality or anything else. It is wonderful, and I would never go back to that religious prison.

I applaud him for having the courage to share his story and his experience, as traumatizing as it was. By sharing his story, he gave society and elected representatives like us an opportunity to reflect and the words and images to understand the violence that Quebecers and Canadians who undergo conversion therapy may experi-

ence. I want Gabriel to know that we are grateful to him and we are thinking of him.

Fortunately, Quebec society and Canadian society, distinct though they may be, have a lot in common, in particular in terms of values. Quebec and Canada agree on certain matters and adopt consistent policies to enhance human rights.

As Bloc Québécois critic for living together, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the Quebec government's human rights protection initiative, Bill 70, which prohibits conversion therapy in Quebec.

• (1220)

May 17 was International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. This year's theme was “For some, showing their colours isn't a choice”. Around the world, LGBTQ2S+ individuals are still the victims of psychological, physical and sexual violence.

The aim of the bill is to put an end to conversion therapy, which is a form of terrible psychological violence unsupported by science.

I would therefore invite all of my colleagues, especially my Conservative colleagues, who are trying to make amendments that could be made at a later date, to act before the end of the session. We must stop postponing the issue and vote to defend and protect LGBTQ2S+ individuals in Quebec and Canada. We must not postpone the adoption of the bill, but vote in favour of it. That is what I ask. No one deserves to suffer needlessly and bear the scars for the rest of their life.

It is our duty to protect the vulnerable. That is why I chose to go into politics. I would also like to mention that, not so long ago, on June 15, the Conservative leader tweeted, “Let me be clear, conversion therapy has no place in Canada and should be banned. Period.... I am committed to fighting this unacceptable and harmful practice. I will not compromise on this issue.” We will see if his word is worth anything when it comes to taking action.

According to a recent official survey, 47,000 Canadian men belonging to a sexual minority have been subjected to conversion therapy. We are not talking about 2,000 men or 5,000 men, but about 47,000 men.

The Bloc Québécois is proud to be a long-time ally of the LGBTQ2S+ community. All of my colleagues were prepared long ago to put an end to the violence of conversion therapy, here and now, so that no sexually or gender-diverse person has to convert, since we love them and celebrate them.

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In conclusion, I do not know if my colleagues have seen the movie *Boy Erased*, but it really helped me understand what conversion therapy is like and the impact it has on individuals and their families. It was so terrifying that it gave me goose bumps. It really opened my eyes. I asked my children to watch it, and then we talked about it. The first thing they said was, “Mom, it is based on a true story. When did it happen?” I answered that it was not very long ago and that this sort of thing is still going on. This 2018 movie is based on the memoirs of Garrard Conley, a 35-year-old author and activist. He recounts the traumatizing and violent experience of the conversion therapy forced on him by his parents. He did not want the therapy. I urge my colleagues to watch the movie, because it was a powerful awareness-raising experience for me and my family.

• (1225)

In the end, that is what it is all about: education, information and understanding others. Regardless of our gender identity or sexual orientation, we are all beautiful in our diversity.

I am pleased to be able to say that the Bloc Québécois has always been resolutely committed to protecting and promoting the rights and freedoms of Quebeckers. I am very proud to belong to a political party that shares my values and that has always been an ally in the fight against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender or gender expression.

I asked my colleagues to stand up and dare to take action. We need to pass Bill C-6 before the end of the session. It is already late, in my opinion. However, as we say, it is never too late.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for the passion she has brought to this issue, speaking so clearly about it and representing the voices of those who have been affected by conversion therapy. I particularly agree with her that we need to pass the bill before the end of this session. I know I have certainly been asking for it on my side of the House, because this is important. I also thank her for the recommendation on that movie. I will look it up because I have not heard of it.

I want to touch on the member's comments in regard to the Leader of the Opposition and the statement he made in June of last year when he said that he was against this. The Conservatives have been trying to use the issue of definition and how it is not detailed enough. Personally, I see that as a red herring. I see it as an excuse to avoid voting for something they claim to be so passionate about, especially when talking to certain demographics in our country.

Could the member comment as to why the Conservatives are so hell-bent on the issue of the definition?

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague.

Let us be frank. When a bill is specific and anticipated and has garnered widespread support, even from the head of the party of in question, but there are still grey areas or clashes of values among

the members of that party, there is only one course they can follow: delay the study of the bill, filibuster and find a way to stretch the process out so that they can say that the bill did not pass in 2021.

After Bill C-8 and Bill C-6, how many others will we have to study? This has to end.

There may be a free vote, but I am convinced that Bill C-6 will be passed. The filibustering must stop, and the bill must be placed on our parliamentary agenda before the end of the session so that the Senate can also study and pass it.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I agree with much of what the member said.

I followed the committee proceedings closely on this bill and noted with great respect the interventions of the Bloc member for Rivière-du-Nord. He also expressed some concerns about the definition as it was amended. It was not only Conservative members, it was also the Bloc member on the committee. He voted against an amendment from the NDP to add in gender expression. Here is what the member of the Bloc said at committee:

Let's say that, in the morning before going to school, an eight-year-old boy decides to wear a dress. His mother might say yes, or she might say no. Either way, if we use that definition, it would be a criminal offence for a mother to tell her son that she does not want him to wear a dress and to force him to wear pants. That's the definition we are about to adopt, and I see a problem with it.

That is a direct quote from the Bloc member for Rivière-du-Nord, who represents the Bloc on that committee, who had concerns about the definition and who listened to the witness testimony. The same Bloc member proposed a motion to delay clause by clause so the written briefings submitted could be reviewed by the committee.

I want to ask the member if she is in alignment with her Bloc colleague in terms of having some concerns about the reference to gender expression and other aspects of the definition and if she shares her colleague's concern about the lack of consideration of written briefs.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

We have stated, explained and spelled out what is included in the proposal we are studying today several times. The role of a committee is to go into detail and analyze the bill from top to bottom in order to be able to take action. As I clearly stated in my speech, we must make it illegal for parents and religious organizations to force individuals to undergo conversion therapy.

That is the least we can do. For now, it is clear that this practice must stop. We read it again earlier. Once the individual reaches adulthood, they will be able to make a voluntary choice. It is clearly indicated in the bill that that is the offence.

The other members are trying to stretch things out so that the bill dies on the Order Paper—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The hon. member for Vancouver East.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is no question that conversion therapy is an attempt to fix members of the SOGI community, and it is wrong. New laws alone will not be sufficient to repair the damages of the past from conversion therapy nor to combat the hate that underlies these programs.

Would the member agree that the government needs to fund capacity building within the SOGI community, so these challenges can be addressed by the community?

• (1235)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, it is clear that, once this bill is adopted, we must start thinking about reparation for the sins of the past, because time is running out.

Our obligations should already have been recognized, as they were in Quebec. We spoke about the pandemic and mental health issues. Some 47,000 individuals were subjected to conversion therapy. As a society, we must make sure that these individuals are well and happy. I completely agree with my colleague.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the interesting things is that the Bloc member who was on the committee at the time raised the concern that he did not feel the definition was clear enough. He said:

For example, I personally have not seen much done to clarify the proposed definition in clause 5 of the bill. I'm really concerned about that definition. All of the witnesses we heard from, regardless of their background, agree that the definition is unclear. Obviously, we all need to think about it.

When I had my practice, lawmakers were seen as godlike figures. Here, however, I find we are being a bit sloppy by doing a clause-by-clause study of the bill when we have not yet had time to read the briefs, thoughts and comments that members of the public have sent us.

For all these reasons, I suggest that we postpone the clause-by-clause study to a meeting after work resumes in January.

Does the member not agree with her colleague that we should perhaps have more fulsome study, so that all those briefs could be seen at committee?

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, as part of our first experiences in this legislature, we realize that some items are proposed in committee and others are added as we go along.

However, we must never forget where we started and why. The aim was to bring in an amendment that would make it an offence for a parent or religious entity to force a minor to undergo conversion therapy under the pretext that that is not the way they were born and they are possessed by a demon. Come on.

While sitting on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, I noticed that, whether we are discussing Pornhub or conflict of interest, the door is always wide open.

We must not forget that when we procrastinate bills die on the Order Paper and, unfortunately, we do not get anywhere. I am ashamed to be in this Parliament and let this bill die on the Order Paper.

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Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle for her excellent speech, which was extremely humane and extremely moving, as always.

The leader of the Bloc Québécois said that the sooner LGBTQ2 individuals are given all the respect they deserve, like everyone else, the sooner we can do that, the sooner we should.

The bill is now at third reading. How does my colleague explain this sense of urgency?

We are in June, and this parliamentary session will soon end. We know that the Liberals are very eager to call an election. The proof is that they invoked closure to pass a bill to reform the Canada Elections Act.

Does my colleague feel this sense of urgency? Does she think the bill will be passed during this Parliament?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I could not agree more. If we want to show the respect and compassion of previous years, we need to act now. We are in the middle of an end-of-session blitz, we can do it; it is a matter of political will.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to be speaking to Bill C-6 today, finally. Here we are more than a year after its introduction with the final version of Bill C-6 before the House for a final debate and vote. That is more than one year longer than this hateful and harmful practice has been allowed to go on.

Hopefully the fact that the bill has been before the House for debate has helped shine a light on the dark places where this so-called therapy takes place, as this is one practice that cannot stand much light. In the interim, many provinces and local governments have enacted bans of their own.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to hear what my colleague is saying, but there is a problem with the interpretation.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The translation is not working. Let us try again.

The hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I will start over, assuming the clock has been stopped.

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I am very pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-6 today, finally. Here we are more than a year after its introduction with the final version of Bill C-6 before the House for a final debate and vote. That is more than one more year longer than this hateful and harmful practice has been allowed to go on.

Hopefully the fact that this bill has been before the House for debate has helped shine a light on the dark places where this so-called therapy takes place, as this is one practice that cannot stand much light. In the interim, many provinces and local governments have enacted bans of their own.

Hopefully this debate will conclude today so we can proceed quickly to a vote and send the bill to that other place, even though the other place has an unfortunate history of killing bills about sexual orientation and gender identity through delay.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sorry to interrupt my fellow comrade, but I think he had a unanimous consent motion that he was hoping to move at the beginning of his speech. I wanted to see if the member was going to do that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. NDP whip for reminding me that I have to ask for consent to share my time with the member for North Island—Powell River.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Does the member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, conversion therapy has been found by all experts to be fraudulent and harmful. It is not sanctioned by any professional organization and many Canadians are surprised this practice still goes on in Canada. However, we heard powerful testimony at the justice committee, documenting the fact that conversion therapy still took place in both what I would call its traditional form, focusing on sexual orientation, and in a new form that argues that those who are transgender, non-binary or gender diverse ought to be talked out of their personal identity.

The New Democrats and almost all members of the SOGI community have long been calling for a complete ban on conversion therapy in all its forms. What we have before us, after amendments at the committee, is a bill that comes close to a complete ban, as close as possible without actually being one.

The Minister of Justice has repeatedly said that the reason for not going ahead with a complete ban is his fear that it would not survive a charter challenge on the basis that it would restrict the rights of consenting adults to freely choose to subject themselves to conversion therapy.

There is an alternative argument that says a complete ban would indeed likely survive a charter challenge because there are strong legal precedents that argue that no one can actually consent to being defrauded or injured. The clearest parallel in the Criminal Code is the case of fight clubs, which remain illegal, as one cannot consent, no matter how freely, to being physically injured. Therefore, if the

evidence is undeniable that conversion therapy is inherently fraudulent and harmful, the same legal principles should apply.

What is banned in Bill C-7? The strongest provision in the bill is a complete ban for minors, including the offence of transporting a minor outside the country to undergo conversion therapy, which is a much more common practice than most Canadians would assume.

Growing up in a society that remains heteronormative and intolerant of any challenges to the binary cisgender norms is challenging enough for queer youth without ending up being pressured into therapy whose goal is to get them to deny who they actually are.

Though Bill C-6 does not institute a complete ban on conversion therapy, it will establish an effective ban on the practice as it prohibits generally what might be called the business practices around conversion therapy. This means there will be a ban on charging for, or profiting from conversion therapy and a ban on paid or unpaid advertising of conversion therapy.

Working together at committee, we did strengthen Bill C-6, although the Conservatives are acting like no amendments actually took place at committee. One of the most important improvements was to alter the original language in Bill C-6, which proposed banning conversion therapy “against a person’s will”. This was vague language with no parallel elsewhere in the Criminal Code of which I know. My amendment was adopted to change this language to a ban on conversion therapy “without consent”.

Using the language of without consent clearly situates the ban on conversion therapy within the well-understood and well-developed Canadian jurisprudence on what does and does not constitute consent. I was disappointed that a second amendment, which sought to spell out the specific limitations on consent that would apply in the case of conversion therapy, was defeated. The testimony we heard from survivors about the kinds of duress they were almost universally under to subject themselves to conversion therapy would clearly obviate any claim of consent.

The second important improvement made at the justice committee was to expand the scope of the definition of conversion therapy to include gender identity and gender expression. This makes the language in Bill C-6 consistent with our existing human rights legislation and the hate crimes section of the Criminal Code as amended by Bill C-16. This is important as the new forms of conversion therapy I mentioned are directed at transgender and gender diverse individuals and at the attempt to get them to deny their gender identity under the guise of helping individuals “adjust”.

A third change to Bill C-6 made at committee was to add to the definition of what was in effect a for greater certainty clause stating what was not covered in the ban, something the Conservatives say they wanted and something they are certainly ignoring as it is now in the bill.

Bill C-6 now makes clear that it does not ban good faith counselling. Let me cite the specific definition again, as I did in my question earlier, as it could not be more clear. This definition “does not include a practice, treatment or service that relates to the exploration and development of an integrated personal identity without favouring any particular sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.” That is specifically in the bill.

● (1245)

Opponents of Bill C-6 continue to insist that the bill will somehow prevent conversations between parents and children or pastors and their faithful on the topics of sexual orientation or gender identity. There is no truth to this claim. The only way these conversations could be captured is if, in fact, they were part of a sustained effort to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity that constitutes a practice or service under the bill. It would be a giant stretch to characterize efforts of parents or pastors to “try to talk their kids out of it” as a practice, service or therapy.

The vehemence of the debate on Bill C-6 around gender identity certainly reflects the fact that trans and gender-diverse Canadians face the highest levels of discrimination of any group in Canada. That discrimination results in high levels of unemployment, difficulties in accessing housing and high levels of violence, including the murder of two transgender Canadians in the last year alone, just for being trans.

During hearings in committee there was a wave of hatred expressed toward me as an individual on social media, which showed me the level of hostility generally toward trans and gender-diverse people in our country. The insults thrown at me ranged from interfering with parental rights to supporting mutilation of children and, most absurdly, being in the pay of big pharma, apparently because transitioning involves hormones. That is a particularly ill-informed charge against someone who has fought all my time in public life for reducing the power of pharmaceutical companies through shorter patents, expanded use of generics, bulk-buying to bring down costs and, ultimately, the establishment of universal pharmacare.

Those insults also included direct threats of violence directed at me, but, again, I remind myself that the hatred I saw, and will inevitably see again after this speech today, provided only a small glimpse into what transgender and gender-diverse Canadians face every day of their lives.

Many of those objecting to the bill have used what I call a “false detransitioning narrative”. To be clear, I am not rejecting the validity of the stories of individuals who may have chosen to detransition, but opponents of Bill C-6 have adopted those stories to construct a false narrative about the number who choose to detransition and their reasons for doing so. Professional, peer-reviewed studies from the U.K. and Scandinavia tell us that very few transgender people actually later detransition. Both major studies cite a number of fewer than five in 1,000 who detransition, and, even more interesting, both studies report that most of them say they detransitioned

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not because it was not right for them, but because they did not get support from family, friends and the community they live and work in.

The implication by critics seems to be that there is something in this bill that would prevent counselling concerning detransition, when this is absolutely not the case. Using the detransition narrative to detract Bill C-6 is false, in that I am pretty sure this argument often actually has nothing to do with the ban on conversion therapy being proposed; it is an argument about the very validity of transgender Canadians.

Let me say that I find these arguments against the bill, and being at my most charitable, are at a minimum parallel, if not identical, to those that continue to cause harm to trans and gender-diverse Canadians, and they indicate why we need this ban. At some point, some might ask why have a bill at all, when CT is universally condemned as fraudulent and harmful. Again, as many members have pointed out, studies show that literally tens of thousands of Canadians have been subjected to this practice.

It is important to listen to the voices of survivors of conversion therapy; only then can we understand the need for this bill. Once again, I want to extend personal thanks to two survivors, Erika Muse and Matt Ashcroft, who spent a lot of time with me trying to give me a better understanding of the horrors they faced and their own challenging roads to recovery.

On a personal note, let me say again that I have seen progress in my lifetime for some in the sexual orientation and gender identity community, but we have a much longer road to follow when it comes to those who are transgender and gender-diverse. What a ban of conversion therapy really says is this: we know it is impossible to change someone's sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and trying to change or repress one's identity is harmful. Let's stop literally torturing young Canadians for being who they are. Let's put an end—

● (1250)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will have to ask the hon. member to continue his points in the questions and comments.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

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Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for his championing of the rights of the LGBTQ+ two-spirit community. I am horrified as he shares with us the abuse he has experienced for standing up for trans rights.

The only problem I have with Bill C-6 is why we call a practice that is clearly torture something called “therapy”. Is it not time to stop calling residential schools “schools” and call them what they were? Is it not time to call what is called “conversion therapy” abuse and torture?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I could not agree with the member more. I thank her, since I ran out of time in my speech, for drawing the parallel to what happened at residential schools. I, of course, share the horror and the need for us to act resolutely on the news that we heard from Kamloops this week.

All the professional studies show that conversion therapy results in depression, self-harm, suicide attempts and many actual deaths by suicide. There is no science behind this practice, there is no reason to continue to call it therapy and that is one of the reasons it should be banned.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would put two points to my colleague. One is around the definition of what constitutes a practice. The word “practice” is not defined in the Criminal Code. One of the issues in outstanding ambiguity and why people are concerned about how this would impact private conversations about questions around sexuality, for example, is that the reference to a treatment, practice or service could include things that are not in a pseudo-therapeutic context.

I also want to ask the member why he opposed allowing for all of the written briefs to be reviewed before clause by clause began. Should we not, as legislators, have the humility to recognize that there may be new information in those written briefs and it is worth—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, this question from a Conservative is a good example of what Conservatives are doing here. They continually try to muddy the waters by talking about terms and definitions.

It is very clear what this bill aims to ban, and that is sustained efforts to get someone to change or repress their sexual orientation and gender identity. There is no doubt about the purpose of this bill. There is no doubt about what is covered in this bill.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his trail-blazing work and advocacy on this front.

We all know well, or ought to know well, that transgender people in Canada face some of the highest rates of violence. I am wondering if my colleague could speak to how this bill would be critical in getting at that violent reality that so many transgender people face simply for being transgender, simply for being who they are. I hope all parliamentarians can get behind the notion that we need legislation to allow people to live who they are.

• (1255)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her kind words.

The very fact that so-called conversion therapy is allowed to go on in the country contributes to homophobia, transphobia, biphobia and the very struggles that people face each and every day because it says that they are somehow illegitimate and should change. Making that very clear definition that, as Canadians, we accept people for who they are and we do not try to get them to deny their identity would be an important step forward in combatting homophobia and transphobia.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am here today to speak on Bill C-6, a bill on conversion therapy and the sometimes deadly impacts it has.

I cannot help but take a pause before I start my speech to acknowledge the deep grief and pain across Canada due to finding the 215 bodies of children in a mass grave at a school in our country. Many elders have said to me that the first part of dealing with this is making sure we support those beautiful babies in moving safely to their ancestors' arms, so I am here in the House of Commons wanting to say we see these precious children and that their loved ones are fighting to make sure they are never silenced again. I say, “Please go home to the loving arms of the people there waiting and know we will continue here to do the work that must be done.” We love them, we see them; we are telling them to go home and be surrounded by love.

For too long, Canada has not listened to residential school survivors and to the loved ones of survivors who have told us again and again of the horrific things they witnessed. Value is a key word today. Enough fighting kids in court. They do not get a second childhood. How many indigenous children should lose their childhood? Enough making indigenous communities choose between clean drinking water and other essential needs. Why would anyone be asked to choose one or the other? Enough make indigenous people fight for basic human rights, rights every other Canadian receives.

Enough paternalistic mechanisms so embedded in the departments of Indigenous Services and Crown-Indigenous Relations that indigenous communities continue to be underserved and under-resourced, and self-determination is blocked every step of the way.

The ugliness of our colonial history is hard to hear. However, it is harder to live, so I encourage all non-indigenous people to listen hard and then work toward reconciliation as an ally, which really means following and amplifying the voices of indigenous people and communities in Canada.

I want to thank my granny, Minnie, who went to Lejac Residential School. She came back broken and working hard to build something better. To my amazing family, who works so hard every day to bring the culture back and to share it with the children, I see their work and I am so grateful.

I also want to say to my niece Daisy, who today, after my sister explained why we are all wearing orange, said to her mom, "Please, don't let them take me to residential school" that we are all going to work so hard, baby, to make sure that never happens. What a relief it is that, unlike indigenous parents and family members in the past, we do not have to be arrested or beaten just for the right to protect her.

Now I will go back to Bill C-6, which is such an important bill.

I believe love is love and that our sexuality and gender identity and expression is a spectrum and celebrating everyone on it is a key point of building community and our country. I am also a parent and a grandparent. I remember when I had my first baby and the overwhelming honour I felt at knowing this being was a gift to me, that my job was to do one thing, which was to do my very best every day to love them exactly the way they are. It is the most beautiful practice of parenthood, in my opinion, that of unconditional love.

Sometimes I struggle with my kids. They are themselves, and getting to know them, as they get to know themselves, can sometimes be challenging. When it is hard, I remind myself my number one job is to be their love foundation and that when they go into the world and face the challenges that are there for them, when they look at me they see someone who loves and believes in them.

I often tell my children they are the best part, because for me they are. Grandchildren, well, that is just a whole other level of being a love foundation.

This is what I think of when I speak today about a bill that would specifically criminalize subjecting a minor to conversion therapy, transporting a minor out of Canada for the purpose of conversion therapy, subjecting adults to conversion therapy against their will and the business of conversion therapy aimed at both minors and adults. This would include criminalizing advertising the service and charging for or profiting from the service.

Let me just say I am absolutely horrified anyone has been supported or paid to try to convince any soul that who they are is not okay. Teens who are exploring transitioning are being subjected to body-affirming therapy that attempts to tell them they should love the body they were born with instead of affirming they can be whoever they want to be and feel themselves to be at their core.

Who are we to tell anyone, much less a growing teenager, to accept their body as it is when that teen knows their body does not match their gender identity and they have felt wrong in their bodies their whole lives? Body-affirming therapy is wrong and must be included in this ban on conversion therapy.

• (1300)

The reality is that we live in a culture where hate toward the SOGIE, or sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, community still happens all too often. Young people know who they are

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but are terrified that, if they say anything, they will lose their love foundation. Some do. Some souls say who they are and they lose their foundation. For those beautiful people, we must keep speaking about this. They need to know that it gets better, and that there are many people out there with love in their hearts waiting to love and accept them.

Any form of conversion therapy, in my opinion, is deadly because it is trying to change someone's wholeness and their being. That is a wound I cannot imagine. Some are told that who they are at their very core is wrong, and are left by the very people who were meant to love them. I want to put on the record that members of the SOGIE community do not need to be fixed, and that it is impossible to change someone's sexual orientation, gender identity or expression through counselling or aversion therapy because there is nothing wrong with them. We know that these attempts at conversion therapy, which are really just torture, and any kinds of attempts to alter a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or expression are harmful. All acts of homophobia and transphobia lead to depression, social isolation, self-harm and even death by suicide.

An earlier speaker on this bill said that the SOGIE community is resilient. Despite the hate in the world, this community is resilient. I have seen this. The many annual Pride events in my riding are a great example. They are loving and powerful. I am so grateful for this. I want to stop the hate in Canada that this community has to be resilient against.

I hope that by getting this bill through the House and the Senate we shut down this horrific practice that harms people so deeply. I hope we all work toward finding love for one another. Life is beautiful, but it is also hard. Who someone is should not mean they have to build up another level of resilience or layer of armour to simply exist in the world. Nothing in this bill affects the ability of parents to discuss questions of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression with their children. It simply does not stop the conversations.

The "what if" argument I am hearing from the Conservatives is disappointing. What I would say is this. What if we lose one more member of the SOGIE community to suicide because they are being taught that who they are is not okay? I want to lean into that fear and work toward saving lives, because to me those lives are more precious and more important than fear. For me, this is a bill that says Canada is beginning to say no to anyone who is making money from or providing conversion therapy.

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Recently, I was able to participate in a virtual event to recognize the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia hosted by the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. I am so grateful for his leadership and hard work on this file. I was able to ask how to be the best ally I could. I will always remember what Brian Chang said. He said that people should advertise when they are allies. They should not just think about it: They should make sure they do all they can to make sure that the people who need to know do not have to ask. I have done my best to be that kind of ally: one who is not passive, but who reaches out and does the work as much as possible. I will always look for more input because I know that we can always do better.

It is hard to recognize that we still live in a world that is not safe for the SOGIE community. This was amplified even more in my riding in December of 2020, when a young person put up a website and followed up with an art exhibit at the Comox Valley Art Gallery. Mackai Sharp had the great bravery to share the story of homophobia he experienced in his community. He named his project “Kill Yourself”. I hope we all take a breath when we hear that.

Hate is a message that tells people who they are is not okay and that they do not belong. I want to continuously work toward a Canada that stops homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. I want a Canada that says clearly, “Love is beautiful. You matter. Your identity matters. Your sexuality matters. Your pronouns matter. Who you are matters.”

• (1305)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to get the member's opinion. Earlier, her NDP colleague said that the bill did not completely ban conversion therapy, which will remain legal for consenting adults. The bill prohibits forced conversion therapy for minors, as well as the advertising and marketing of such therapy, among other things.

Could my colleague tell me whether she thinks that the bill should have gone farther and completely banned conversion therapy?

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I think this bill goes forward to make sure that conversion therapy is no longer allowed. We need to continue to fight this and make sure there is no misinterpretation. We have to watch for that, because one of the challenges we see is that so many things are happening behind closed doors that should not be. Whenever a person is told that who they are is not okay and is made to feel less about themselves, we should always stand up and say that is not okay.

I agree that if people want to ask questions and want to have a conversation with a trusted person about things they are thinking about, as long as they are supported, it is something totally different from conversion therapy. I thank the member so much for his question. When we address any issue of groups that have been oppressed and harmed, we must always question and always know that the fight must continue.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the many important things that she said, many of which I agree with.

I want to follow up on a question I had asked her colleague on the issue of the submission of written briefs. I asked him a two-part question and we only got to the response on the first part of it.

Many stakeholder groups submitted written briefs to the committee, and many of those briefs were given to members only on the day of. It was the contention of the Bloc member, and one I agreed with, that by refusing to delay clause by clause in order to allow it to look at these written briefs, the committee did not show much respect for the work of people who had studied the bill and submitted suggestions. Given that the government did not call this legislation for another five months, there would have been sufficient time for the committee to look at those briefs.

Why did the NDP vote against reviewing the many written briefs that were submitted before proceeding with clause by clause? There are many details in this bill. There might be good information about how things could be refined, expanded or adjusted in some way.

Why did the NDP not want to have those written briefs considered?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I will remind the member that amendments were made to the bill that clarified some of the concerns brought forward. I would say it has been unfortunate how slowly this bill has moved through the House, largely because of Conservative interruption and Liberal interruption. People of the SOGIE community are dying because of these terrible practices. It is not okay, in Canada, to tell anyone that who they are is not okay. They have a right to exist and they have a right to exist safely. This bill starts that process in a meaningful way. We must get it to the next steps.

• (1310)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe that the government has prioritized this legislation. We have had a substantial number of pieces of legislation related to the pandemic and the budget, yet we want to see Bill C-6 pass.

Can the member provide her thoughts on how important it is to get opposition parties not only to speak, but also to take into consideration the passage of this important legislation?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with the member that we must get this through the House as soon as possible. Saving lives is important.

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

This afternoon, I am very pleased to be able to speak to the bill that is before us today. It is a very relevant and important bill, which, without exaggeration, has the potential to save lives.

I feel very strongly about Bill C-6, an act to amend the Criminal Code with regard to conversion therapy. My son Nicolas is a PhD student in chemistry. He likes to play sports, sail and do all sorts of other great things. These are the traits that characterize him and set him apart from others. My son is also gay. I can say that I am proud to live in a society and a country that does not characterize people based on their sex, gender or sexual orientation. This bill deals with a subject that is very personal to me and so my emotions may get the better of me during my speech.

Nevertheless, in the next few minutes, I will attempt to illustrate why Bill C-6 is an excellent bill, especially why it is truly essential, and why it is, in my humble opinion, high time we legislate on this issue.

For a long time, homosexuality was considered immoral, deviant and even criminal. Some still hold those views today, and I will refrain from citing some truly appalling speeches heard recently in the House on this subject. Some people think that homosexuality is not genetic. They believe it is caused by a trauma, the influence of an evil spirit, or a disorder linked to gender identity. Others believe that homosexuality is a choice, and therefore it can be changed, or that it is a mental disorder. There are those who would argue that it is a sin that must be resisted or a demon that needs to be exorcised.

Historically, many methods have been employed to punish or cure homosexuality: riding a bike to the point of exhaustion, applying electrodes, administering chemical substances, or psychoanalytic therapy.

Conversion therapy started to emerge in the 1990s. Let us be clear about what conversion therapy is. Conversion therapy aims to change an individual's sexual orientation to heterosexual, specifically in order to reduce or repress non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviours, or to change an individual's gender identity to match the sex he or she was assigned to at birth.

Sexual reorientation practices aim to silence the individual's diversity in favour of a specific sexual orientation, namely heterosexuality. Framing sexual orientation as a choice within a binary system is, in the end, just another argument used to legitimize the homophobic nature of sexual reorientation practices.

How can conversion therapy still exist in 2021, after great advances like legalizing gay marriage and making it possible for same-sex couples to adopt? That is why we need to legislate on this issue.

What does this bill really do? Our colleagues across the aisle have raised a number of concerns about the bill, which is why it is

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important to set the record straight. If passed, the legislation would prohibit conversion therapy for minors and make it illegal to transport a minor outside of Canada for such therapy. It would also make it illegal to subject adults to conversion therapy against their will.

Lastly, the bill makes it illegal to profit from or advertize conversion therapy.

I want to send a clear message to my colleagues. We must vote with full knowledge of the facts. Private conversations between a parent and child, or between two people, are not and will not be prohibited. Supporting someone who is genuinely questioning their sexual orientation is legitimate. However, encouraging these individuals to repress their same-sex attraction is not the right solution. Instead, they should be supported in fighting the homophobia they may have internalized. That is why we introduced Bill C-6.

● (1315)

Conversion therapy is based on the false premise that an individual's sexual orientation and gender identity and expression can and must change to conform to an extremely narrow and outdated view of what is "natural" or "normal".

Despite the decriminalization and depathologization of homosexuality, there are still quite a few organizations that provide treatments to "heal" homosexuality. Those who carry out rites, prayers or exorcisms generally do not do so openly. They say they deliver or liberate people from the demon of homosexuality.

The evidence collected has exposed situations where people are forcibly confined, assaulted and experience outright physical and emotional abuse. Furthermore, it has been shown that parents fail to ensure the safety and development of their children by encouraging them to participate in practices of sexual reorientation because they knew that third parties could emotionally and physically mistreat them.

Several experts, including psychiatrist Richard Montoro, have stated that providing conversion therapy is tantamount to homophobia and is a serious threat to health and fundamental rights. This type of therapy has cognitive and social consequences and can lead to anxiety, depression and even suicidal ideation.

The Pan American Health Organization has said that there is no medical justification for conversion therapy. When I met with them, representatives from organizations in my community, such as GRIS Estrie and Fièvre la fête, all said that this is an unjustifiable practice that must be denounced and subject to sanctions.

It is absolutely essential that we help people accept their sexual orientation, rather than encouraging them to fight their homosexuality, often in a homophobic and heterosexist social environment.

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We cannot change the past, but I hope that this discussion will help advance gender and sexual diversity rights, in the hopes of building a fairer society. It is a positive for someone who is homosexual to say that they are lucky because they are accepted by their family, friends and community, but we can do so much better. The fact that someone even has to say these things is proof of widespread prejudice.

When I read the letter my son wrote to tell us he was gay, I cried. I cried because of the world and its prejudice. I cried because this world, which claims to be egalitarian, categorizes people and still places white heterosexual men on a pedestal.

Consider all of the discrimination packed into those three little words: white heterosexual men. We have seen too many examples of this in the news in recent months. We are living in a society where people who are different are at best marginalized and, at worst, abused and killed. That is why minorities always have to fight to maintain and build on their gains. Despite our efforts to change things, are we still be intolerant of difference?

Let us hope that this vote will prove the opposite. Conversion therapy is a destructive, cruel and deadly practice. It has no place in Canada or anywhere else.

• (1320)

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for giving her son, Nicolas, such a wonderful, welcoming, supportive home to live in. She is so right in saying that anyone from the SOGIE community should not have to say that they were lucky because they were raised in such a way; it should just be how our society is.

I would like to give the member a little more time, as the mother of a gay son, to say why bills like this are important to ensuring that this stigma is reduced for all Canadians and that those barriers to equality of opportunity can be removed, because love is love and whom one loves should not determine one's path to equality in Canada.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me time to speak a little more about Bill C-6.

[Translation]

Every individual should be able to be who they are. We are who we are, the way we were born. Living in an open society where everyone is accepted as they are requires great openness, and that is what makes our communities strong. In my opinion, Canada's strength is that it accepts difference and diversity.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her testimony, which says it all. I would also like to thank her for sharing a more personal story with us.

In October 2020, the Quebec government tabled a bill in this respect. The justice minister said that conversion therapy was a barbaric practice, and my colleague corroborated this through the examples she gave.

I would like to ask my colleague a question.

Why does she think such a bill was not passed unanimously?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

Attitudes change over the years and decades. The fact that LGBTQ2+ communities are more engaged in raising awareness and are more visible in every sphere of life once again demonstrates Canadians' openness. In my opinion, attitudes had to change if there was to be an equal place for everyone. It is because of ongoing efforts and our way of doing things that we have made it this far. It is high time that we passed Bill C-6 and prohibited conversion therapy in Canada.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her very moving speech. I would particularly like to recognize her for sharing her personal story of her family with us. This bill is so important to ensure that everyone is accepted for who they are. That is what this bill is about.

With respect to conversion therapy, one of the issues that New Democrats want to see is to include body-affirming therapies also banned. Does the member agree with that premise? If so, what work does she think needs to be done to get the government moving in that direction?

• (1325)

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her important question.

The speech I gave this afternoon came from the heart. Where I come from, at home, we all live together and there is no difference between us. Everyone is happy, we love everybody and there are no barriers. That is how life goes.

I will now come back to conversion therapy. To go a little further with Bill C-6, I will say that everyone has the right to live their life as they are. Each individual must be accepted by society the way they are. The more we—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, like others, I do appreciate the words spoken by my colleague, who brings a very important personal perspective. She is right when she makes the assessment that all of us, every person living in Canada and around the world, have the right to be who we are. It is important. That is the reason I support Bill C-6. Conversion therapy is a degrading practice that targets vulnerable LGBTQ2 Canadians in an attempt to change their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. It can lead to a life-long trauma.

The other day, I was listening to my colleague from Don Valley West and I really appreciated what he said. He put out a challenge to those individuals who might be thinking about voting against Bill C-6. I want to repeat verbatim what he said the other day. I would ask, in particular, for members of the Conservative caucus to listen to what he said. The member for Don Valley West said the following:

...I do expect every member in this House to truly wrestle with what it means for them to vote against this bill. If they say they are voting against it as a matter of conscience, then I believe they need to stare deeply into that conscience and ask themselves, "Why would I want to perpetuate an injustice against another human being, a friend, a colleague, a family member, a neighbour, a constituent, anyone who will be hurt by that action; hurt perhaps to the point of death?" Why would they not want to stand with the vulnerable, with the oppressed, with the stigmatized, with the people who need their help the most?

I listened, and I have heard a great deal of debate. For me, it is a human rights issue. I do believe there are many within the Conservative Party who see the true value behind Bill C-6, and I applaud them for whatever advocacy they might be able to provide within their own caucus. It sends a very powerful message to the population as a whole when the House of Commons is united, especially on issues such as this.

Bill C-6 has the potential to have a profoundly positive impact on our society. I would suggest to my Conservative friends, as I suggested to one of my New Democratic colleagues, that the time for passing this legislation is now. There is no need to indefinitely hold off on the passage of this legislation or put into place roadblocks that would see it prolonged.

I believe that the support of the House of Commons of a unanimous nature would go a long way in sending a strong and powerful message that we are all equals. When I listen to Conservatives speak on the bill, it seems to me that they oppose conversion therapy, yet they tend to want to focus on what I would suggest are issues that are not relevant as to why the bill should not pass. The concerns have been addressed.

• (1330)

This bill would not prevent conversations aimed at exploring a person's sexual identity, including conversations with friends, family members, teachers, social workers, psychologists, religious leaders and so on. Members of the Conservative caucus know that. If they did not, then they now do. If they believe that to be the case, they should be very specific as to why they think that because they are planting the seed of doubt.

Conversion therapy is rooted in the wrongful premise that sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression can and should be changed to fit a narrow idea of what is normal or natural. This is the reason it is so important that, as legislators, we do what we can to ensure there is a sense of equality.

There are measures contained in the bill that are some of the most progressive and comprehensive responses, from a legislative perspective, to conversion therapy in the world. The government is also fulfilling a campaign commitment on conversion therapy, especially with respect to minors, to ensure that no one is subjected to this practice. We will continue to work with other stakeholders, provinces and territories in particular, to end conversion therapy in Canada.

Government Orders

Having been a parliamentarian for a few decades now, I can talk about the impact this has on our communities. I think of the individuals, the people who are put into such a position that the contemplation of suicide is very real and tangible. Sadly, it sometimes takes place, and this is because of outside pressures and people telling them they are not normal.

I believe that is so wrong. At the end of the day, as a community, we need to be accepting of all people. Ultimately, we need to strive to send that message collectively, and that would be a whole lot easier if we were to get support from all members of the House.

When I reflect on past years, there has been significant progress, whether in protests, particularly at the Manitoba legislature, or pride parades, which go beyond major cities and are now in smaller municipalities. However, there is still more to do. Bill C-6 is a strong, powerful step in the right direction.

Based, at least in part, on the correspondence I have received from people expressing concerns, I would remind them of what I said earlier. The bill would not prevent conversations aimed at exploring people's sexual identity, including conversations with friends, family and so on.

Hopefully I have been able to add to the discussion we are having on this. In particular, I call upon my Conservative friends to see the intrinsic value of this legislation and the impact we can have by having one voice on it.

• (1335)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, first of all, conversion therapy is a human rights abuse, and I support many of the concepts my colleague just put forward. This will be a question from a Conservative MP to a Liberal MP about a provincial NDP policy.

I believe in Manitoba in 2015, the Manitoba legislature put in place policies to end the practice of conversion therapy. Given my colleague is a Winnipeg MP, I was wondering if he would maybe want to expand a bit on what he was talking about and how we can put policy in place to support the rights for equality of opportunity while ensuring other rights are protected.

I was wondering if he wanted to speak a bit about that in the context of the Manitoba provincial legislation and policy.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, for me, what it highlights is something I made reference to, which is that there is still more to do. As my colleague referenced the province of Manitoba, whether it is the provinces, the territories, or even other stakeholders, Ottawa can support, and should encourage, positive steps forward.

I do not necessarily know the details of what the member posed to me in her question. I suspect my daughter would because she is a member of the Manitoba legislature and a very strong advocate on the issue. I would not want to say something and later have her say, "Dad, you got it wrong."

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to the debate since earlier and there has really been some very touching testimony, including that of the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

I am a bit of a special case. As some people probably know, I was in the arts before I was in politics. It is a more progressive environment than society in general, and in my personal life for the past 30 years, homosexuality and gender acceptance have not been taboo subjects. In my everyday life, I moved beyond the concerns of Bill C-6 30 years ago and I think in more advanced terms.

Since we now seem to be accepting Bill C-6, I would like my colleague to tell us how we could make society more open with respect to all gender issues.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is one of the advantages of longevity as parliamentarian over the years. I suggest members take a look at debates that have taken place, and they will find a stronger progressive attitude on this issue as years have gone by. There are some aspects of our society, and the arts community is an excellent example, that have been more open for many years, while there have been others who needed to become more informed and provided with more comfort.

Fortunately, today we are on very solid footing. I would suggest, as I indicated in my comments, there still is a great deal more to do. I emphasize that the national government has a national leadership role to play in working with other stakeholders on this issue.

• (1340)

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, I agree with my esteemed colleague that coercive therapy does not work. According to a Nanos poll, 72% of Canadians support a wait-and-see approach for counselling young people, meaning they support the right of parents to delay medical treatment for gender transition until the child is mature enough to understand the repercussions.

Does the member believe parents should preserve that right to guide their young children with a wait-and-see approach, or does he believe children as young as seven or eight have the cognitive ability to understand the impact puberty blockers will have on their health in years to come?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I believe that the legislation has that issue covered. It is good, solid legislation, and the member should truly support it.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to rise in the House today and speak to a very difficult issue. It is difficult because it is a very personal issue, one that is close to the hearts and minds of so many Canadians, and I understand why it would be.

Throughout Canada's young history, many LGBTQ individuals have been seriously and irreversibly harmed by the effects of conversion therapy. Many have fallen victim to a practice that is now widely understood to be horrific in nature and rooted in many false and prejudiced views against LGBTQ Canadians.

I am grateful to the constituents of my riding who have respectfully engaged with me on this issue and shared their support for the banning of conversion therapy. To my constituents and to all Canadians, I assure them that I stand with them. Conversion therapy is wrong, and it must be banned.

However, the concern I have with Bill C-6, and the concerns I have heard from literally hundreds of individuals who have reached out to me over the past few months, is that the bill would do much more than just ban conversion therapy. One of the fundamental flaws of the bill, and what is becoming a signature move of this government, is that it does not properly define what type of practices and services the government is specifically trying to ban. As a result, its overbroad definition, one that would criminalize important support services, would, ironically, end up hurting the very individuals we are trying most to protect. Let me explain.

One of the critical supports the bill would ban is the open access to counselling to manage sexual behaviour. Unlike every professional or medical institution in North America, the bill includes in its definition of conversion therapy "a practice, treatment or service designed to...repress or reduce non-heterosexual...behaviour".

We looked at 152 definitions of conversion therapy around the world, including those of the United Nations and all the governments that have passed a law or bylaw on this issue, and not a single one has used the definition of conversion therapy that is in the legislation before us. None of them included in their definition a ban on sexual behaviour counselling, independent of orientation change. I want to reiterate this because this is important: Not one medical body or government in the world defines conversion therapy this way. None of them include in their definition a ban on sexual behaviour counselling.

This is highly concerning, as the reality is that Canadians may want counselling to help reduce or change all kinds of behaviours, including sexual behaviour, yet the government's definition is written in such a way that it would negatively impact equal access to counselling for LGBTQ individuals, as no counsellor would be allowed to help repress or reduce non-heterosexual behaviour.

For example, an individual struggling with a heterosexual porn addiction and the compulsive desire to have extramarital, heterosexual affairs can go and get counselling to help manage their sex addictions. However, a homosexual individual wanting counselling to manage the same behaviours would not be able to access that support. I think we can all agree that this is discrimination. No individual should be prevented from getting the mental and/or behavioural supports they want.

In fact, most Canadians agree. A Nanos poll conducted earlier this year reported that 91% of Canadians support the right of Canadians to get the counselling of their choice, regardless of sexual orientation. That is 91% of Canadians who do not think that anyone should be discriminated against for getting the help they want. Canadians are raising their voices out of concern on this.

The justice committee heard numerous testimonies and received dozens of expert briefs explaining what they called a “chill effect” where, regardless of any assurances from the federal government, no counsellor would want to help LGBTQ individuals manage their behaviours for fear of breaking the law and sacrificing their careers. They also said that, even if a counsellor was willing to discretely provide such services to the LGBTQ community, these professionals would be difficult to find, given that the bill would also make a criminal of anyone “who knowingly promotes or advertises an offer to provide conversion therapy”. By definition, promotes or advertises would include a word-of-mouth referral by a parent or pastor to a counsellor who provides these services.

This reality of a chill effect on counselling has already caused serious concern to a young man who wrote to my office. In his correspondence, he writes of being happily married to an amazing woman, the love of his life, and of being the father to two beautiful children, with another on the way. He is also attracted to men.

In order to find the most fulfillment in his married life, he decided, with the support of his wife, to get counselling to help him manage his same-sex attractions. He describes that this has been a huge benefit to him and his family. His concern with Bill C-6 is that its scope is so large that it would criminalize the conversations that he freely sought out. He asks why he should be prevented from accessing the help he needs to pursue the sexual identity and the relationships he chooses.

• (1345)

It is critical that the definition in the legislation gets in line with all other medical bodies in North America. It is the role of the government to ban bad practices, but not to decide what identity or behaviours an individual should realize. That freedom should be left to the individual.

I fully support a ban that focuses on harmful medical practices, but not on one that attacks Canadians' freedom to choose their outcomes and goals.

I also want to speak to the very real concern that the bill would cast a dark shadow on free and open conversations between parents, teachers and clergy with their dependents. I know first-hand that children reaching adolescence often have many questions regarding sexuality and gender, but Bill C-6 would basically allow big brother into the home, church, synagogue or mosque, and it would bar parents and spiritual leaders from providing the guidance and direction that children and teens need, especially when they are in such a vulnerable and malleable stage in life.

Parents in particular have rights and responsibilities toward their children, which includes the right to guide and direct them in accordance with their own world-view. We would be entering dangerous territory with the legislation, where the government would be telling parents what they may or may not say to their children. While we need to work toward an even-handed approach that protects the rights of the LGBTQ community and protects children from potential abusive therapies, we also need to protect the rights of all Canadians to hold their own perspectives on sexuality and raise their children in accordance with these views.

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Again, the justice committee received hundreds of briefs from different faith communities, all expressing this concern. However, I have to wonder if the justice minister has even read a single one of those briefs, because the justice committee sure did not. I was extremely disappointed that instead of taking the time to carefully consider the record number of public submissions, the government decided to rush the legislation through committee study before those briefs could even be translated for consideration. The government did not even bother to go over or elaborate on the evidence received by the committee or the testimonies of the witnesses. Instead, the report suggested a small handful of minor edits that in no way addressed the concerns of those who were opposed to the legislation.

That is why I am grateful to speak today and bring to light the concerns of Canadians that the government refuses to address. That is why we, as Conservatives, put forward an amendment to the legislation that would protect these private conversations. Our amendment even used language pulled directly from the government's own website, but still the Liberals refused to support it.

I have to ask the Minister of Justice this. If he was willing to acknowledge this concern on his website and provide clarification, why was he not willing to do the same on the actual legislation?

He and I both know that an explanatory note on a government website will not convince the courts when this issue gets challenged. Judges do not refer to a website when making a ruling; they are going to look at and use the terms that have been laid out in the legislation we are debating today.

Therefore, before I can support the bill, it needs to make very clear that good faith conversations, where personal views on sexual orientation, sexual feelings, sexual behaviour or gender identity are expressed, such as where teachers, school counsellors, pastoral counsellors, faith leaders, doctors, mental health professionals, friends or family members respectfully provide support to persons with respect to sexual orientation, sexual feelings or gender identity, are protected.

Finally, in my time remaining, I want to touch on what is perhaps the most damaging in this bill, and that is its conflation of gender identity and sexual orientation. These are two very different issues and treating them as the same in this legislation will undoubtedly have many harmful effects on Canadians. While identifying as gay or lesbian at a young age may not have any biological consequence, choosing to identify as transgender does and irreversibly so if chemical and surgical transition follow.

Government Orders

• (1350)

Few young children have the cognitive capacity to state with certainty that they are transgender, yet Bill C-6 makes no distinction between 17 year olds and seven year olds. Any move on the part of parents or counsellors to simply encourage children to be comfortable in their own bodies or to practise watchful waiting could be a criminal offence under this bill.

Is something not out of place here, where parental consent is required to allow children to join a field trip or to get a tattoo, but when it comes to changing their gender, the child has full authority?

I have three wonderful children. They are bright kids, but I can assure members that nine times out of 10 they do not know what is best for themselves. Simply put, that is why my wife and I are their guardians until they are adults and until they have reached an age where they have the cognitive capacity to make permanent and life-altering decisions, such as having a surgical procedure or having certain treatments done that would have a permanent and long-lasting effect on their lives. Therefore, why then would we pass legislation that would allow children as young as five years old to make these irreversible decisions on their own?

It is becoming increasingly clear that the majority of children with questions about their gender identity eventually grow comfortable with their biological gender and their dysphoria desists after some time. That is why watchful waiting has been used by some health professionals and experts as a way to see if what they are experiencing is a temporary phase in the child's life or if the dysphoria persists over a period of time. Watchful waiting allows parents and professionals to understand the particular circumstances of children experiencing gender dysphoria and to give them the opportunity to naturally desist or see if their gender dysphoria persists.

Why encourage watchful waiting? If children want to transition, why stop or delay their ability to do so? The reality is that should children's dysphoria desist and down the road they identify with their biological gender, the path back is not so easy. Many transition therapies have long and irreversible consequences.

Dr. Debra Soh, a neuroscientist and sex researcher, who earned her PhD from York University, wrote the following in an article for *Quillette* back in 2018. She said:

Therapy that seeks to help gender dysphoric children grow comfortable in their birth sex (known in the research literature as the "therapeutic approach") has been conflated with conversion therapy, but this is inaccurate. All of the available research following gender dysphoric children longitudinally shows that the majority desist; they outgrow their feelings of dysphoria by puberty and grow up to be gay in adulthood, not transgender.

Children will say they "are" the opposite sex because that's the only language they have to express to adults that they want to do things the opposite sex does. Cross-sex behavior has also been shown to be a strong predictor of homosexuality in men. Previous research tells us that even children who are severe in their feelings of dysphoria will desist.

However, Bill C-6 as written treats the likelihood of gender-dysphoric children desisting as an impossibility or as somehow wrong.

Ms. Lisa Bilty, a lawyer from the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, warned the justice committee that the bill as written would force a one-size-fits-all approach to dealing with gender-dysphoric children, rushing to affirm a child's purported gender

identity. As she testified, cautious measured approaches are not the danger. Rather, she said:

A free society that supports individual rights, as Canada is supposed to be, would allow parents, children and health professionals to find the best path for each unique child, not have the state preordain that transition is the only permissible option.

If members do not want to hear it from the experts, let us listen to what Canadians think.

The same Nanos poll I referenced earlier found that 72% of Canadians supported a wait-and-see approach for counselling young people who were thinking about changing their bodies with drug treatment. That is a vast majority of Canadians who support a therapeutic approach that this bill would ban.

• (1355)

It is clear to me that most Canadians understand that the push for the immediate affirmation and transition of all gender-dysphoric children is dangerous. If we encourage all children struggling with their gender identity to transition, we run the risk of them eventually undergoing medical procedures that are irreversible without a sober second thought, because such thought would have been criminalized with Bill C-6.

We would do well to learn from the mistakes being made by those countries leading in the progressive charge.

Just last December, the British High Court ruled that children under 16 did not have the capacity to consent to life-changing transition surgeries. This case was the result of a growing number of law suits from transitioners who had come to regret their decision to transition at a young age and were now arguing that the government did not properly protect their vulnerability.

In the ruling, the High Court argued that children under 16 did not have the ability to understand the long-term consequences of receiving puberty-blocking drugs and banned them from receiving such treatment. Other European countries are now moving in that direction as well.

In contrast, in Canada, Bill C-6 would effectively prevent young people from receiving help to accept their biological gender, even if they wanted it.

To be clear, the ban in this legislation would allow for any minor to get counselling and support to transition away from their biological sex, but they would not be allowed to get counselling that would help them identify with their biological sex, even if they wanted that help.

We are going down a dangerous path here. It is a path that other countries have already gone down and have come to regret. We need to stand up for all children and all their specific needs. That is what I am seeking to do here in standing up to speak to the one-directional or one-size-fits-all approach of the legislation.

I want to end my speech where I started, by reiterating that I support a conversion therapy ban, however, I do not support the ban as written in this legislation. It is far too broad and will end up hurting the very people we are trying to protect. Everyone has the right to be treated with the utmost dignity and respect, but it is precisely because of this right that we should not criminalize legitimate therapies designed to help patients explore their sexual identity and/or gender identity.

While the government's intentions with this bill may be pure, its attempt to eliminate an evil is fundamentally flawed and will have far-reaching negative consequences. For these reasons, I cannot support the bill as written. I urge the government to go back to the drawing board and get the legislation right for the sake of the LGBTQ community and for all Canadians.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have 10 minutes for questions and comments after Oral Questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ETHIOPIA

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation within the Tigray region of Ethiopia has been heartbreaking for Canadians across the country to witness. As the number of refugees fleeing the region grows and the violence toward innocent people continues, I want to reiterate Canada's call for immediate de-escalation and for a peaceful resolution between both parties.

The human rights violations taking place, particularly against women and girls, are beyond horrific. The protection of civilians must be upheld in accordance with international law and humanitarian principles. In doing our part, I want to commend the Minister of International Development on providing \$3 million in aid to help those affected by the conflict in Tigray and those who have fled to Sudan seeking safety. This funding will respond to urgent needs, including emergency health care, shelter, non-food items, water, sanitation and protection.

Our government will always speak out against human rights abuses, no matter where they occur, and reiterate our commitment to peaceful resolution.

• (1400)

2015 GENERAL ELECTION

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Ind.): Madam Speaker, it is agreed that systemic racism is a reality in many institutions in Canada. I want to enlighten this House about how power is misused to suppress and discriminate within the community itself.

Statements by Members

In the 2015 election, a powerful person as co-chair inducted candidates linked to the World Sikh Organization, anti-India and other allies and, further, got preferential positions into the government to conduct their common motives. These acts of institutional systemic racism sidelined the talented individuals and organizations and affected my riding too.

I urge in future all political parties and the government to take preventive measures through bold steps to curb such challenges so as to provide equal opportunities to Canadians.

LOCAL CLEAN TECHNOLOGY BUSINESS

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, last Thursday, it was announced that a Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound business, Hydrogen Optimized, has been awarded \$4.8 million of federal funding to support its \$12-million program to advance, scale and commercialize its technology.

Hydrogen Optimized is a sustainable energy conversion company. This innovative business enables the production of green hydrogen for green electricity that will be essential in supporting fossil fuel industries as sustainability leaders.

I had the opportunity to meet with Hydrogen Optimized and tour its facility, and I believe it is important to continue to invest in Canadian cutting-edge clean technology. This Canadian company is playing a part in advancing our global leadership in the green tech market, helping the environment while creating jobs and economic growth in the riding and eventually across Canada.

I would like to congratulate Hydrogen Optimized on all its success thus far, and I look forward to seeing what it will accomplish in the future.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today marks the end of the fourth annual Jewish Heritage Month. It has been a time to reflect on the diverse contributions of Jewish Canadians to this great country from coast to coast to coast. I have had the pleasure of joining with Jewish community members and colleagues to celebrate the local histories of Jewish Canadians in communities across the country.

Statements by Members

In 2018, this Parliament unanimously passed the bill making Jewish Heritage Month a reality. Right now, Jewish Canadians need the support of each and every one of us.

The past few weeks have seen a sharp and disturbing rise in anti-Semitism across the country: vicious symbols and slogans of hate, invoking the Holocaust and calling for death to Jews, intimidation in Jewish neighbourhoods, repeated acts of anti-Semitic violence and vandalism, all directed at Jewish people, businesses and communities in Canada. This must stop. It is not Canadian and has no place in our country. It cannot be allowed to fester or it will grow and threaten every community. None of us are immune.

We must stop anti-Semitism and all forms of hate wherever and whenever they arise.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, federally regulated workers have long been unfairly treated. I want to talk about the lack of provisions in the Canada Labour Code preventing employers from hiring scabs during strikes or lockouts.

Striking is an essential tool that allows workers to stand up for their fundamental right to free collective bargaining. Allowing employers to hire scabs deprives workers of that right. This practice has been banned under the Quebec Labour Code since 1977. It is high time that it was banned at the federal level.

I join my voice to those of the workers at Unifor, who launched a campaign on May 13 for the enactment of federal anti-scab legislation. It is high time to address this injustice and join the 21st century.

* * *

• (1405)

MER BLEUE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on May 26, I had the pleasure of taking part in an engaging discussion with around 20 students from a civics class at Collège catholique Mer Bleue, in Orléans.

The teacher, Zachary Boisvert, and the students all asked great questions. I was delighted to explain the legislative process to the class, since they enjoyed a simulation and debate at the House of Commons earlier in the semester. They understood the importance of doing research to draft a bill, and the need to introduce and debate it. I also had the pleasure of talking about my role and experience as a parliamentarian and about how we can introduce bills as members, which we refer to as “private members’ business”.

I want to sincerely thank them for their invitation and their civic engagement.

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the government said it intends to put a rover on the moon. This came after the member for Nunavut spoke truth. Federal institutions like the House of Commons are not easily changed and governments do not help indigenous peoples without an immense amount of pressure. This begs the question, how can the government talk about putting a rover on the moon, symbolically claiming more territory for Canada, while being content to allow the generational impacts of Canada's colonialism to go unaddressed?

We live under the shadow of gross inequalities and injustices faced by first nations and indigenous persons: lack of clean drinking water, deplorable housing conditions, systemic racism, abuse, neglect, human trafficking, erasure of culture and tradition, human rights abuses, and 215 children in a mass grave.

This is Canada's shame to bear and Canada's responsibility to make right. Let the government not reach for the moon without first bringing justice to the people whose traditional territories Canada stands upon.

* * *

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, a Canadian radio icon, Terry DiMonte, signed off the CHOM airwaves for the last time, after a stellar 40-year-plus career as a broadcaster that began in Churchill, Manitoba and led him back to his native Montreal, where he spent nearly three decades greeting morning listeners with friendly repartee, good humour, comforting words at difficult moments in the city's history, and great music and musical anecdotes.

Montrealers, on Friday, listened misty-eyed, and that includes me, to an outpouring of love and appreciation for Terry from radio colleagues and musician friends like Jann Arden and Chris de Burgh, not to mention from the Prime Minister, who, in an extraordinary on-air conversation with Terry, reminisced about their long-standing friendship, interwoven with distinctly Montreal stories. We thank Terry for shaping our sense of ourselves as Montrealers.

[Translation]

Best wishes to you and your beloved, Jessica. May life treat you well, our dear friend.

* * *

[English]

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the last day of Jewish Heritage Month. Unfortunately, this month, the celebrations have been overshadowed by the greatest wave of anti-Semitism that I have seen in my lifetime.

Events in the Middle East should not lead to hate in Canada, but they do. People in their nineties have told me that they have not felt this level of fear since the 1930s, the time of the Christie Pits Riot in Toronto and our “None is too many” Jewish refugee policy. Some constituents have told me they are afraid to take their kids to the park. Schools and day cares have stopped letting their students leave school grounds at recess. An elderly couple told me they have taken their mezuzah off their door.

This should not be happening in Canada. I call on all my colleagues to publicly denounce anti-Semitism in Canada and ask them to please issue a public statement if they have not already done so. Countering hate is all of our responsibility.

* * *

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Bill Makinson, a well-known local media personality and civic leader in Cornwall and surrounding communities, who announced that after volunteering and working with YourTV in Cornwall since 1976, he will retire on Friday.

While Bill has spent numerous hours in the studio, his commitment to volunteerism has been matched by only a few people over the years: Big Brothers Big Sisters, United Way, Crafting a Cure, the MS golf tournament, the Cornwall and Area Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, just to name a few.

As Bill begins his next chapter in a well-deserved retirement, I want to say that we have appreciated his leadership, dedication and the difference he has made for many organizations. We thank him for going over and above his day-to-day responsibilities. We are expecting him and Sue to come back to Cornwall often, as he moves closer to his daughter and grandchildren, to see the many friends he has made and the organizations he has helped over the years. Well done on a successful career and record of service. I wish him an enjoyable retirement.

* * *

● (1410)

ONTARIO CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured to rise to recognize and congratulate a leader in my community of Kingston and the Islands, our local chief medical officer of health, Dr. Kieran Moore.

Dr. Moore has arguably overseen the most effective localized pandemic response in Ontario. With expertise in disaster medicine, Dr. Moore knew early on in the COVID-19 pandemic that being prepared meant immediately redirecting and deploying critical health inspectors to long-term care homes to protect the most vulnerable in our community. Working with all stakeholders daily, the Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Health Unit fared well throughout the past 15 months under Dr. Moore's leadership.

That leadership has not gone unnoticed. Today, the provincial legislature in Ontario will vote to appoint Dr. Moore as the new

Statements by Members

chief medical officer of health for Ontario. It could not have made a better selection. There is no doubt that his acute attention to detail, combined with his energy, passion and the occasional hockey reference when explaining a situation, is exactly what this province needs to see us through the rest of the pandemic.

I congratulate Dr. Moore once again. He handled our community incredibly well, and I know Ontarians will be in great hands with him in this new role.

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RACISM ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Edmonton Oilers were eliminated from the Stanley Cup playoffs last week. After the fourth and final loss, as devastating as it was for the team and the fans, one teammate bore the brunt of on-line hate. Ethan Bear, an indigenous player from Ochapowace First Nation, had to deal with racist comments targeted at him personally on social media.

In response, Ethan made a brave video statement denouncing racism to help make change for all people of colour. However, his video should not have to be made and should not have to be called “brave”. It is 2021 in Canada. We have all been educated about the impact of racism and the harm of our words, but, sadly, racism persists and increasingly under anonymous social media accounts. This repugnant racial polarization is damaging to society.

Ethan and his girlfriend, Lenasia, eloquently called out racism in their video, but to truly eradicate racism we must all continuously and tenaciously do our part.

* * *

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought many issues to light, and chief among them is the struggle Canadians are facing in accessing mental health services in a timely manner. Almost six months ago, this House voted unanimously in favour of a motion put forward by my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George to establish a three-digit national suicide prevention hotline. Though nearly half a year has passed, the Liberals have yet to take action in this much-needed initiative.

Statements by Members

Thankfully, my riding has shown support for the establishment of this hotline. The communities of Radville, Alida, Fillmore, Torquay, Ogema, Yellow Grass, Frobisher, Kenosee, Weyburn, as well as the RMs of Bengough, Lomond and The Gap, have all passed similar motions and are looking to the federal government to take some action.

Canadians expect their government to fulfill its commitments and get them the help they need. While the Liberals continue to sit on their hands and do nothing, we Conservatives will keep on fighting to secure the mental health of Canadian citizens now and into the future.

* * *

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I became an MP, I was a biologist. One of the most exciting and fulfilling parts of that career was my time on the board of the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The person leading that organization was John Lounds.

When John joined the NCC as CEO in 1997, it had several dozen employees and an annual budget of \$8 million. As he leaves the NCC this year, it has more than 350 employees, thriving programs in every province and a budget close to \$100 million. That success is in large part due to John's quiet professionalism, guiding the NCC into major partnerships with the federal government. Combined, these programs have delivered more than one billion dollars' worth of conservation across the country, adding to the more than 14 million hectares of habitat protected in Canada with NCC's help.

John Lounds is a champion. He inspires others to dream of what Canada and the earth can be if we put nature first. I thank John and offer him my best wishes on his retirement.

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● (1415)

[Translation]

MONTREAL CANADIENS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, tonight, millions of us will be glued to our TV sets, jumping to our feet like our parents before us, proud of our team like our grandparents before us, confident that the greatest dynasty in hockey history is still capable of working its magic.

We will see Maurice Richard in Gallagher's determination, Patrick Roy in the genius of Price, Béliveau in our captain Weber, Charbonneau in Danault's stick handling, Lafleur in Caufield's shots, Doug Harvey in Petry's game, and Claude Lemieux in the risks taken by "KK" and Suzuki. All the ghosts of the Montreal Canadiens will be in our team's locker room. Believe me when I say that millions of us Quebecers will be on the ice with the Habs.

It is game seven, the Canadiens are being overlooked, and that is when they are the most dangerous. Here are three words that might sound very English, but, believe me, there are no three words more quintessentially Quebecer than these, when every Quebecer screams them at the top of their lungs tonight: Go, Habs, go!

[English]

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ADDICTION

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, deaths from overdoses are in the headlines often, and rightfully so. Last year, a record 1,700 people died from overdoses in B.C. alone, an absolute tragedy.

Lurking behind this is an even larger issue of substance abuse and addiction. Over 20% of Canadians, or eight million, will battle substance abuse at some point in their lives. Addiction is not a respecter of gender, of race or ethnic background, a position of age or political preference. The solutions are not simple. There are overlaps with a host of other social issues, including mental health and domestic abuse. That is why today I introduced Motion No. 88, calling on all members to recognize that we have reached a crisis point and pleading with the government to take action by developing and implementing a federal framework for addiction recovery treatment.

The lives of untold thousands of Canadians are literally at stake. Conservatives remain committed to securing access to addiction recovery treatment.

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RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the orange shirt story, Phyllis Webstad writes about the abuse she endured as a Secwepemc girl at a residential school, denied the ability to wear her favourite shirt, to speak her language, to practise her culture. After a year of abuse, the story concludes with a reunion with her granny, when Phyllis had "everything she needed" and she never went back to the residential school again, but not every child was as lucky as Phyllis.

The shocking truth of those words was laid bare when we learned from the Secwepemc about a mass grave of 215 indigenous kids, some as young as three, on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. That is both shocking and heart-breaking, speaking to the horrific legacy of a racist colonial policy of assimilation that took children's lives.

We cannot turn back the clock, but we must help with the healing. As a nation, we must determine the full scale of residential school deaths that took place across Canada. We must support survivors and properly mourn and memorialize those innocent souls taken. The memory of those who were not as lucky as Phyllis deserves nothing less.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been grieving today and over the weekend after hearing the deeply sad and disturbing news of the remains of 215 indigenous children found at a residential school in Kamloops.

Empty shoes are being left on front steps across the nation and flags are being flown at half-mast. We are all so saddened for these children, their families and their relatives.

Indigenous leaders have asked for a thorough probe to find out the identity of these precious little children.

Can the government please update this House on what its plans are?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are heartbroken by the discovery of the remains of 215 children in Kamloops. This is a horrific tragedy that has once again deepened the wounds of the survivors of residential schools, their families and indigenous people across Canada.

We worked with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to develop and maintain the national residential school student death register and to create an online registry of residential school cemeteries.

We are working with the communities to develop culturally appropriate approaches to identifying the deceased children, locating burial sites and memorializing those who died.

• (1420)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians are shocked by the tragedy that occurred in Kamloops, where the bodies of 215 indigenous children were found in a mass grave near the residential school they attended. This shocking discovery will not soon be forgotten.

The horror is indescribable. The children were not even given a proper burial. British Columbia indigenous leaders want the children to be identified and their bodies returned to their families.

Can the government update us on the situation?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people across the country and in indigenous communities feel the pain of this discovery. Not one community is untouched by the situation.

The member opposite will be pleased to hear that we will be there for communities. Most importantly, we will be there with communities, and we will respect their wishes. Grieving communities need support.

On Thursday evening, I spoke to Chief Casimir and assured her of my steadfast support for the grieving and reconciliation process over the coming weeks. We have been in contact since then as well.

Oral Questions

We will be there with them as they lead this initiative, and we will help meet their needs in the coming weeks and months.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic relationship with the United States is breaking down rapidly. First the Americans cancelled Keystone XL. The government was silent. Then the Americans put Line 5 on the chopping block and there was barely a peep from the Liberals. Now it is Canada's forestry sector. For months, the Liberals have been telling us how much they agree with the Americans.

What is it going to take for the Liberal government to stand up for Canadian workers?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are definitely disappointed by the recent announcement of the United States' administrative review on softwood lumber. The duties are unjustified, they are unwarranted, they hurt our forestry workers and businesses and they hurt American forestry workers and businesses too.

Canada continues to press for a negotiated settlement as that is in the best interests of both our countries, and we will vigorously defend Canada's interests, particularly interests of workers in our softwood lumber industry.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, this is like a broken record with these Liberals. On Keystone, all the Prime Minister could muster was one call to Biden before it got cancelled.

On Line 5, the Prime Minister did not even raise it with the President until he got pressure from the Conservatives.

These Liberals have gone six years without a softwood lumber deal. This should not be a big surprise to the Minister of Natural Resources. On Friday, though, he revealed that the Americans will not even negotiate with him on softwood lumber.

Why are Canada's natural resources and our resource workers always just an afterthought for these Liberals?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is hardly the case. Our workers are not an afterthought on softwood lumber, nor are they an afterthought on oil and gas.

Oral Questions

I can tell the House, particularly on Line 5, with the Government of Canada filing that amicus brief in the United States federal court, that we did so with the support of provinces, industry and labour. We are working together on a team Canada approach because we know that Canadians will not be left out in the cold. On Line 5, while that court process unfolds, we will keep working at the political and diplomatic levels to make sure that Canada's energy workers and our energy security are the top priorities.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been six years since Canada and the United States had an actual softwood lumber agreement. For the past four years under the previous U.S. administration, relations were somewhat difficult, to say the least. That is understandable. When President Biden was elected, the Prime Minister was all happy and enthusiastic that Canada now had an ally.

Nonetheless, what did the Canadian natural resources minister's American counterpart do the day after their meeting? He imposed new tariffs. What is the point of having a Liberal government that claims to have good relations when it never get results?

[English]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, in softwood lumber, the duties are unjustified. They are unwarranted. They hurt our forestry workers. They hurt our businesses, but they hurt American forestry workers and businesses too and that is why we continue to press for a negotiated settlement. We know that that is in the best interests of both of our countries.

We will vigorously defend Canadian interests, the interests of our workers and the interests of our softwood lumber industry.

* * *

• (1425)

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, like its National Assembly, Quebec wants to apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses. In Ottawa, the Minister of Official Languages says she will protect the right to work in French. However, that is not what Bill 101 does. Bill 101 does not protect the right to work in French; it makes French the language of work in Quebec.

Quebeckers are not asking for the right to work in French. They already have that right. What they want is for French to become the official language of work. Will the minister agree to apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the start, we have all been saying that French is in decline in Quebec and that more needs to be done for French. Not only have we been saying it, but we have been walking the talk through the minister's actions.

We are doing something extremely important. We are taking real action to strengthen French throughout Quebec and across Canada. It seems to me that the Bloc Québécois should be happy about that, rather than trying to pick fights.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in its language reform document, the federal government does not say it intends to make French the language of work in Quebec. Rather, it says that it will extend the application of the Official Languages Act to all federally regulated businesses.

However, this act is not designed to protect French; it protects bilingualism. Bilingualism has never been better in Quebec. It is French that needs to be protected, not bilingualism.

Will the federal government allow Quebec to subject federally regulated businesses to Bill 101? If it really wants to help the French language, that is what it needs to do.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have more bad news for the Bloc Québécois. We are currently working very well with the Quebec government to strengthen French throughout Quebec, as well as with the other provinces to strengthen it elsewhere in Canada.

I know the Bloc Québécois does not like it when there is no bickering and everything is running smoothly. However, we are currently working hand in hand to ensure that the French language, which we cherish and love dearly, is much stronger and more resilient, and that it will be there for generations to come.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 215 indigenous children were found buried at a former residential school in Kamloops. We all mourn the loss of those children, but to honour their lives, we need to move beyond words to action. Right now the Prime Minister is fighting indigenous kids in court. Right now the Prime Minister is fighting survivors of residential schools in court.

Will the Prime Minister move beyond words to actions and stop fighting these kids in court and these survivors in court?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has said time and time again that we will compensate children for the harm that they have suffered. We have acknowledged as much.

This is a time where we perhaps do need to reflect on the course of reconciliation, but this is also a time where we must continue with the communities at the forefront to help their search in the truth. There can be no healing without the truth. We will work with those communities, the surrounding communities and all indigenous communities that are hurting to pursue the truth. There can be no healing without the truth. We will provide resources to help them, to help them in their healing and continue on this path in ensuring that the truth comes out so that we all, all Canadians, all indigenous peoples in Canada can be looked at straight in the eyes and not look—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby South.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people across the country have been stunned by the discovery of the remains of 215 indigenous children buried at a residential school. We mourn the loss of these children.

However, to honour the lives of these children, we need to move beyond words. Will the Prime Minister pledge to stop fighting indigenous children and residential school survivors in court, yes or no?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has been very clear about this. We will compensate those who were harmed while in the care of child services. There is a time for the government to reflect on reconciliation, but right now, we need to help the communities in question on their path and their search for the truth. The search continues, as we do not know the whole truth. We will support these communities by providing mental health resources. There can be no healing without the truth.

* * *

• (1430)

[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a stunning reversal, the CRTC has decided to increase the wholesale fees that small Internet service providers are forced to pay to the large telecom oligarchs in the country. This, of course, reinforces the exceptionally high prices that Canadians already pay for connectivity that is much less expensive in other OECD countries. It also runs against the Liberal promise to reduce rates by 25%.

Is it not time that we change this uncompetitive oligopoly and provide more competition and choice to consumers?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague well knows, our government has been relentless in promoting competition to lower prices, while working to improve the quality and increase the coverage of telecom services in Canada.

We are ensuring that Canadians pay affordable prices for reliable Internet services, regardless of where they live in our nation. We will keep on working with service providers and industry partners to drive investment and make telecommunication services more affordable and accessible for all Canadians.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the opposite of what the Liberals promised. During the election, they said they would work with the regulatory agencies to force a 25% reduction for consumers. However, now we see the CRTC raising prices.

Of course, these increases are going to be passed on to consumers, and obviously we do not have enough competition in Canada. What will the government do to make the system more open to competition and create a true free market?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. He should know that our government is constantly fostering competition to drive down prices across the country, while at the same time working to improve quality and, of course, expand the coverage of telecommunications services in Canada.

We are working to ensure that Canadians pay an affordable price for effective Internet services, wherever they live. We will continue to work with service providers and partners to drive investment and make Internet services more affordable for Canadians across the country.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Canadian Heritage suggested that Bill C-10 would not limit net neutrality in any way. However, in Bill C-10, the Liberal government is giving the CRTC more powers to regulate social networks, blogs, online gaming sites, apps and even audiobooks.

Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage honestly think that regulating these platforms is in keeping with the principle of net neutrality?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-10 does not affect Internet service providers. The only thing this bill does is ask web giants like Netflix to contribute to the creation of Canadian content. This represents work in Canada for our Canadian artists. There is nothing against net neutrality in this bill, because it does not affect Internet service providers.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an internal memo sent to the minister clearly stated that apps like YouTube, TikTok, Amazon Prime, NHL.TV, TVA Sports en direct, RDS Direct, Sportsnet Now, PlayStation and many others will be subject to the CRTC rules.

I repeat my very simple question: Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage honestly think that regulating the platforms I listed and all of the others is in keeping with net neutrality?

Oral Questions

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I answered that question.

The Broadcasting Act has not been updated in 30 years. Foreign web giants have come onto the market since then. They are making money in Canada but are not contributing to our creative cultural industries. Bill C-10 is designed to modernize our broadcasting system.

Why have the Conservatives been promising all along to block the passage of Bill C-10 and to let these web giants make money in Canada without contributing to Canadian jobs and Canadian content?

• (1435)

[English]

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we often hear it said that diversity is our strength. At least, that is what the Prime Minister often says. The irony with this is that Bill C-10 would actually attack diversity by narrowly defining what is constituted as Canadian content and therefore what will be demoted and what will be promoted online. Government-censored choice is not choice and government-approved diversity is not true diversity.

Why is the minister insistent on hindering the expression of those who do not fit his mould?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Broadcasting Act has not been updated for 30 years and during that time foreign web giants have stepped into that void. They have made money in Canada without contributing to our cultural creative industries. Bill C-10 seeks to modernize our broadcasting system and to level the playing field between our traditional broadcasters and these foreign web giants.

Why have the Conservatives vowed from the very beginning to block Bill C-10 and let these web giants make money in Canada without contributing to our Canadian jobs and creations?

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this bill has everything to do with attacking Canadians and nothing to do with going after these web giants.

Canadian content creators from minority groups are doing better than ever on platforms like YouTube. They are able to reach a global audience without any interference from the government. Now we are hearing from leaders in these groups that these artists will be among the hardest hit with Bill C-10 should it go through.

Why is the government so adamant on picking what is and what is not Canadian, and thereby suppressing the voices of minority groups in Canada?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Broadcasting Act has not been updated in 30 years, before streaming services even became a part of the way Canadians found their shows, movies and music. It needed an update.

The rules for social media companies and their obligations would be restricted to requiring them to report the revenues they make in Canada, contribute a portion of those revenues back to Canadian

cultural industries and to make Canadian creators discoverable. That would be good for Canadian jobs and our Canadian artists.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, the Minister of Justice announced that he was appointing one of his generous donors to the bench, someone who had contributed \$2,200 to his riding and his nomination contest. This is the second time the minister has announced the appointment of a benefactor. Last year, he appointed someone who had donated \$2,900.

This time, the minister was too excited and jumped the gun. Apparently his donor's appointment was not yet official, and the nomination is still under review.

Does the minister agree that his government should implement a non-partisan appointment process before appointing another one of his donors?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is having technical difficulties at the moment.

In answer to my Bloc Québécois colleague's question, there is no doubt the process is completely independent and done in accordance with the rules. My colleague is well aware of that.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it was a mistake. The minister did not mean to announce the appointment of a political donor to the bench on Twitter. I understand that, but the simple fact that his name ended up on the minister's Twitter account shows just how high up he is on the list of candidates. This is a reminder that the Liberals screen their candidates using the "Liberalist", their infamous partisan tool that helps them check the donation histories of future judges. This is a reminder that last year, the minister appointed another one of his personal donors to the bench.

When will the minister finally implement an appointment process that is based solely on objective criteria?

• (1440)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have put in place a judicial appointment process to choose qualified candidates who also reflect our diversity.

With regard to the situation the member raised, I would point out that the Ethics Commissioner said that simply making a donation did not constitute a bond of friendship. We are doing good work to bring diversity to the bench and appoint the right candidates.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. We are in no way questioning the quality of the candidates. We are questioning the fact that the Liberals are looking at whether candidates are Liberal donors.

What happened is that the minister mistakenly announced the appointment of one of his donors. Last year, he appointed another one of his donors. Two years ago, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs also managed to get four of his donors appointed.

Does the minister realize that it is hard to believe in coincidence when it is his own office appointing judges?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tweets were posted by the Department of Justice and not the minister himself.

Furthermore, apologies have already been made to the individuals concerned. Apologies were made, and this issue, this situation, was addressed.

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[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 31, two years ago, the government's lab in Winnipeg shipped the Ebola and Henipah viruses to the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Have there been any other shipments from the Winnipeg lab to the Wuhan lab of viruses or other materials?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, the National Microbiology Lab is a secure facility. We take threats to research security and intellectual property very seriously. Everyone working and visiting the National Microbiology Lab must undergo security screening and adhere to strict security protocols, procedures and policies.

We will never put the health and safety of Canadians at risk.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if that is true, then how on earth did a Chinese military scientist gain access to work in the Winnipeg lab? Did the sudden departure of the two most senior people at the Public Health Agency of Canada last year, in the middle of the pandemic, have anything to do with this: the head of the lab, Dr. Matthew Gilmour, on Friday, May 15; and the president of the agency, Ms. Tina Namiesniowski, on Friday, September 18?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, I am not at liberty to discuss the confidential reasons why the scientists left the lab. They are subject to privacy concerns, as the member opposite knows.

However, let me be clear that the National Microbiology Lab is a Canadian jewel. It is a secure facility. Everyone who works at the facility or visits the facility must undergo security screening and adhere to strict security protocols, procedures and policies.

We will never put the health of Canadians at risk.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year, at the beginning of the pandemic, we asked the Prime Minister whether it was possible to stop flights from China from landing in Canada. The Prime Minister called us racist.

Oral Questions

Last week, we asked questions about Canada's top-secret laboratory. The Prime Minister called us racist.

However, my question is very simple and clear. Are there still people from the Chinese Communist regime working at the Winnipeg lab, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly in the House, every individual who works in or visits the lab undergoes strict security screenings and protocols. This is a secure lab. It is a crown jewel. We are so proud of the work done at the National Microbiology Laboratory and are grateful to the scientists and researchers who are working so hard to ensure that we have what we need to understand COVID, to test for COVID and to support provinces and territories in their hard work to do so. We will never put privacy and intellectual property at risk. We will ensure that the lab continues to operate in a secure and safe fashion.

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● (1445)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again residential school survivors, families and nations are mourning with the news of 215 children found buried in a mass grave at Kamloops Indian Residential School. In response to this tragedy, the UBC Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre is calling on the federal government to make immediate investments to assist nations in locating children who never returned home.

When will the government get serious about implementing the TRC calls to action, including numbers 73 and 75, and bring our children home?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are heartbroken at the discovery of the remains of the 215 children in Kamloops. This is a horrific tragedy that has once again deepened the wounds of survivors of residential schools, of their families and of indigenous people across Canada. We have been working with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to develop and maintain the national residential schools student death register and to create an online registry of residential school cemeteries.

We are also currently engaging with indigenous communities impacted by residential schools on how best to implement calls to action 72 to 76 and invest the \$33.8 million—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Nunavut.

Oral Questions

Ms. Mumilaq Qaqqaq (Nunavut, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal government and churches ripped children away from their homes, put them into residential schools and kept their bodies. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission lays out a clear path to doing the right thing, yet the current federal government has stayed at a standstill.

There were three-year-old babies in the ground. How many more are there? When will the federal government implement calls to action 71 through 76? Our children's bodies deserve to come home.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly share in the grief that my friend for Nunavut has outlined. This is a national tragedy. It is one that our government has been working for the past six years to rectify. We are fully committed to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action, all 94 of them, but most notably calls to action 72 to 76. We are also investing \$33.8 million through budget 2019 in order to engage with the indigenous communities impacted by residential schools on how best to implement these calls. We look forward to working with everyone on this—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Northwest Territories.

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PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here in Northwest Territories, we have experienced significant flooding in recent weeks. Residents of Fort Simpson, Jean Marie and Fort Good Hope have suffered major damage to their homes, and other communities along the Mackenzie River have also had high water levels.

Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness please update the House on how the Government of Canada is working with its partners to assist any areas affected by this flooding?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Northwest Territories not only for his important question, but for his tireless and unrelenting advocacy to ensure that members of his community receive the help that they require.

As we have said throughout the pandemic, our government will always be there to protect Canadians through any type of emergency. Recently, our government approved a request for assistance to deploy up to 60 Canadian Rangers to the territory to assist communities that are being impacted by or are at risk of floods. The Rangers will continue their support until the situation is stabilized, and we are always ready to adapt the model as required by the people of the Northwest Territories.

I take the opportunity to thank all of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Rangers for their outstanding work.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the justice minister let it

slip that he was making yet another judicial appointment to a top campaign donor: another day, another Liberal minister helping an insider jump the queue to get the inside track. Canadians expect their judicial appointments to be based solely on merit, not on candidates' connections to Liberal ministers.

Will the justice minister tell Canadians the minimum donation to his campaign needed to be considered for an appointment?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have taken a significant and important step to ensure that the process for naming judges is transparent and accountable to Canadians. Those reforms include revamping the judicial advisory committees that provide independent recommendations to the minister. That has resulted in a modernized judicial appointment process that not only meets the needs of the court, but also reflects Canada's diversity.

● (1450)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Liberals appointed judges in a transparent way solely on their merit using a non-partisan process, then why did the justice minister delete the tweet naming his campaign donor and then throw the public service under the bus for it? It is clear that being a Liberal donor is a prerequisite for a lawyer to be appointed to the bench under the justice minister. It is Liberals helping Liberals.

When will the justice minister start appointing judges based solely on their merit rather than on donations to his election campaigns?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to quote the Ethics Commissioner on this very issue. He stated, "Making donations to a political party, or to a particular riding, does not indicate in itself a friendship. It is perfectly legal to make political donations." What we want is qualified candidates from all backgrounds and all political stripes to bring their names forward, and we are disappointed that the official opposition is turning this into a partisan game.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a new report from the U.K. is raising alarms about solar panel parts manufacturers in China who have been linked to the potential use of forced labour by Uighurs. While Canada says it has trade measures in place on forced labour, the trade minister could not tell me back in April if Canada had even stopped one shipment using them.

Can the minister confirm now if these trade measures have stopped any imports of solar panels made using the forced labour of Uighurs?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my hon. colleague that we will always advocate and stand up for human rights around the world. Our government is actively working on operationalizing the forced labour ban. We are doing that with our colleagues at the CBSA and also with labour. We are working across the government and also with our international partners to ensure that Canadian businesses here at home and abroad are not unknowingly involved in any supply chains involving forced labour.

We expect Canadian companies around the world to respect human rights and to operate at the highest ethical level.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, reports indicate that nearly half of the world's polysilicon used in solar panels is produced in Xinjiang. Concerns have been raised for months that Uighur forced labour may be used in these supply chains. The fact that the minister cannot say whether trade measures are preventing imports is disappointing. What is the point of these measures if they do not have any teeth?

Will the government commit to reviewing Canada's solar panel supply chains and their failing forced labour trade measures?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, standing up for human rights is what we have been unequivocal about. We expect Canadian companies that are working here in Canada, as well as around the world, to respect human rights and to operate at the highest ethical standards. We are working actively to operationalize the forced labour ban. We are working across the government as well as with our international partners not only to operationalize the ban, but more importantly to ensure that businesses are not unknowingly involved in any supply chains that would involve forced labour.

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[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Indigenous Services said that it was unacceptable that the Indian Act has not yet been abolished.

Surprise, surprise. I would remind him that he is the minister and his government has been in power for six years. He is right, this needs to happen in partnership with indigenous peoples, Quebec and the provinces, but in six years, there has been no discussion

Oral Questions

that has led to an agreement. What concrete action is the minister taking to abolish the Indian Act?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this topic is all the more painful in the wake of this week-end's news. Obviously the Indian Act is entirely unacceptable, but it is also unacceptable to abolish it in one fell swoop from on high in Ottawa. This is something that must be done in tandem, in partnership with the indigenous communities involved.

With all due respect, the member has got it all wrong. The new modern treaties prove it, especially in western Canada. I would also remind the member of the great progress made by agreement communities in Quebec's far north, which have been leaders in this—

• (1455)

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we were all shocked by the discovery of the remains of 215 children buried at the former residential school in Kamloops. The Indian Act created two classes of human beings and treated this second class inhumanely.

Today, we must ensure that we identify all the children who disappeared and were buried at indigenous residential schools. Will the minister pledge to fund this research so we can fulfill our duty to remember and allow indigenous nations to grieve?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will absolutely support these communities.

However, I would like to remind the member that call to action 76 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada states that indigenous communities shall lead such efforts. We will be there for them if they wish to conduct research and carry out digs. The provinces have also indicated that they will be there for them.

This truth must come out for all Canadians. First and foremost we must support indigenous people in searching for the truth, as there can be no healing without the truth.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is the 30th and final day for the minister to report to Parliament on the effectiveness of the national housing strategy through its first triennial report.

Oral Questions

In every single part of the country, housing prices continue to rise. The cost of construction is skyrocketing and young Canadians and first-time homebuyers are telling the government their dream of home ownership is more out of reach.

Why is the minister leaving transparency to the last minute? Is he trying to delay proof of the Liberals' record?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain firmly committed to tackling the crucial issue of housing affordability in Canada. Our government is focused on ensuring that Canada's residential housing stock is not used unproductively by non-resident, non-Canadian investors. That is why we are proposing an annual 1% tax on the value of non-resident, non-Canadian-owned residential real estate that is considered to be vacant or underused. Budget 2021 is also the fifth consecutive budget that our government has presented that provides more money for affordable housing.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has claimed that science and evidence must always underpin the decisions made by any government.

However, evidence acquired by BCWF's Jesse Zeman shows that the DFO assistant deputy minister's office altered a key scientific report to downplay the threats to endangered steelhead. Even DFO scientist Sean MacConnachie warned that this interference “continues to compromise the scientific integrity of the process”.

How can the government say its decisions are based on science when it so clearly undermines science when making these decisions?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, DFO uses all the best available science in making its decisions with regard to steelhead trout, salmon and every species. We will continue to work with our indigenous partners, the provinces and territories to make sure we are doing everything we can to protect these very endangered species.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many businesses need help getting foreign workers. Some have been waiting a very long time, since spring 2020. The answers they get are “it is because of COVID-19” or “we are taking care of critical files”. The pandemic has been going on for a year, but the problem has been around much longer than the health crisis.

Worse yet, Quebec has unreasonable delays compared to other provinces. Can the immigration minister tell us what he intends to do to resolve the issue quickly and respect our Quebec entrepreneurs?

[English]

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government recognizes the importance of temporary foreign workers, for example for our producers and food processors. We are working tirelessly to ensure that temporary foreign workers can arrive safely in Canada by supporting employers, for example, with additional costs incurred to accommodate the isolation period.

All the federal departments involved in the temporary foreign worker program have worked together to simplify processes and facilitate, as much as possible, the safe entry of workers. We recognize the integral roles temporary foreign workers and, for example, food processing employers play in ensuring Canadians have access to food, and we are here to support them.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reopening la belle province is the result of the significant sacrifices Quebecers made to fight COVID-19. I want to thank my constituents for rolling up their sleeves and working together. Quebec is finally coming out of lockdown, but we cannot be complacent, not after all the progress we have made.

We will fight COVID-19 by vaccinating people. Can the minister provide an update on the vaccines that Quebecers are relying on to get back to normal?

● (1500)

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Alfred-Pellan for his excellent work.

The good news keeps rolling in for Quebec. To date, we have delivered more than 5.8 million doses in Quebec, and a total of over 26 million in Canada. That translates into 59% of Quebecers fighting COVID-19.

I encourage everyone to keep up the momentum as more than 56% of Canadians have had their first dose. What we are achieving right now is historic.

[English]

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an internal government communication plan from the PMPRB labels patient organizations, such as Cystic Fibrosis Canada and the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders, as engaging in disinformation.

The PMPRB is not accusing these patient advocacy groups of being misinformed or having a difference of opinion. They are calling patient groups, often run by moms, dads and sick kids, liars.

My question to the health minister is simple. Does she approve of what the PMPRB is doing, and if not, is she going to rein them in?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first let me say that I have personally met with many patient groups since becoming Minister of Health and prior to that. The Liberal government is always willing to listen to families and patient groups that are, of course, advocating for the best treatment for their family members and loved ones.

In regard to the PMPRB, the organization has undertaken important work to understand the pricing of drugs here in Canada. As we know, that work is an essential part in our commitment to lowering the cost of drugs, including those for rare diseases, for all Canadians in this country.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, weeks ago, Michigan generously offered its surplus vaccines to residents in Windsor-Essex. Thousands of vaccines are being tossed daily by the city of Detroit, and despite repeated appeals by local officials, the Liberal government has taken no action.

Only 4% of Canadians are fully vaccinated. Among those waiting are hundreds of thousands of local residents. Enough with the excuses, delays and Liberal red tape. When will the government take action to ensure that the U.S. vaccines are available immediately?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell the opposition and my hon. colleague about taking action.

We have delivered 26.2 million doses to provinces and territories. More than 60% of eligible Canadians have received at least one dose. We are second in the G20 at the current time. We are bringing in millions and millions of doses every single week for Canadians, and we will not stop until all Canadians have access to vaccines.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal quarantine hotels have been a disaster from the beginning. Before it officially began, some confused Canadians were put into the program. Families were not told where their loved ones were being taken.

Stories of mistreatment and sexual assault were not enough for the Liberals to reconsider. They kept saying it would prevent new variants from entering Canada. Guess what? It did not work the way they said it would, and they failed to protect Canadians.

Will the Liberals listen to the expert advisory panel and scrap the failed program?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me start by thanking Canadians for their commitment to staying home during this time when we are all working to fight COVID-19.

Oral Questions

In fact, travel volumes are down by 95% from the volumes prior to COVID-19 striking our shores. I want to thank Canadians for their incredible sacrifices.

I will also say this: The report from the testing and screening panel is very important in charting our next steps on the border. I will be meeting with my health minister colleagues in the days to come, and we will have a conversation about next steps together. This is a team Canada approach.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, York Region has over 2,400 diesel buses that travel from the Richmond Hill Viva station to the Finch subway station as part of the regular daily commuter traffic. The recent announcement on smart transit funding for the GTA, including the Yonge North subway extension, is great news for our communities.

Could the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities share with us how this investment would benefit the more than 1.2 million Canadians who live in York Region?

• (1505)

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): I wish everyone a happy Canadian Environment Week.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member and his colleagues in the York region for their continued support and advocacy for this project. Our historic investment of \$2.24 billion for the Yonge North subway extension will benefit commuters from across the region, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create good jobs for Canadians. This funding includes a number of conditions, including requirements to hire historically disadvantaged groups.

In a shout-out to CHEO, I am happy to support youth mental health and to have coloured my hair green.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the discovery of the bodies of 215 first nations children at an old Catholic residential school site has set off shockwaves of grief across this country. It is a dark symbol of the war against first nations children that has gone on from Confederation right up to this day.

The Prime Minister has spent over \$9 million on lawyers trying to overturn the human rights tribunal that found his government guilty of systemic discrimination against first nations children, so he can stop with the crocodile tears. It is time to end the war against first nations kids.

Routine Proceedings

When is the Prime Minister going to stop paying the lawyers and start paying the compensation these children deserve and should be getting now?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that we are heartbroken by the discovery of the remains of the 215 children in Kamloops. This is a horrific tragedy that has once again deepened the wounds of the survivors of residential schools, their families and indigenous people across Canada.

We have worked with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to develop and maintain the national residential school student death register and to create an online registry of residential school cemeteries. We are also working with communities to develop culturally appropriate approaches to identifying the deceased children, locating burial sites and memorializing those who died.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been struggling to make ends meet through the pandemic. At the same time, four of Canada's big banks have raised service charges.

Small businesses that are struggling to stay afloat are being fleeced by excessive transaction fees. Despite low lending rates, the interest rates on credit cards remain high. Payday loan companies prey on the hardships of low-income Canadians.

All of these financial service providers continue to post record profits. Will the government rein in these exploitative corporations to protect Canadians and small businesses?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for his hard work and commitment. We agree that now, more than ever, everyone needs to pay their fair share and do their part. That is why, in the budget, we commit to taking action to reducing credit card interchange fees.

We know that small businesses have been among the hardest hit by this pandemic. We know those credit card fees hurt them. That is why we are committed to working to support them.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

CONDUCT OF THE MEMBER FOR PONTIAC

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to the question of privilege raised by the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London. I understand the concerns raised by the member. This was indeed an unfortunate and unacceptable incident.

I would simply like to point out that the member for Pontiac has taken responsibility for this incident. He has apologized and proactively disclosed that the incident occurred. He has stepped aside from his parliamentary secretary responsibilities and from his committee responsibilities. He has stated publicly that he will seek assistance.

In light of the fact that the member has indicated that he is taking some time to seek assistance, he cannot apologize in person or virtually for this incident, but he has apologized in his statement on social media. He has also asked that I convey this apology to members in this House on his behalf.

While this incident is indeed unfortunate and unacceptable, I do not believe that it constitutes a question of privilege. There is a long-standing tradition in this House that, when a member apologizes, the House accepts that apology. I believe the member for Pontiac understands the seriousness of the incident, has apologized for it and is taking the appropriate steps to ensure that nothing like this happens again.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member, and I will take that under consideration.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 28 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

● (1510)

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, 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 delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe respecting its participation at the 20th winter meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, held by video conference from February 24 to 26, 2021.

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[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following two reports of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources: the fourth report, entitled "Main Estimates 2021-22"; and the fifth report, entitled "Supplementary Estimates (A), 2021-22".

The committee has considered the estimates referred by the House and reports them back without amendment.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. It concerns the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

The committee has studied the estimates and has agreed to report them back to the House without amendment.

Mr. Paul Manly: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I believe, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, during the debate on the business of supply, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), later today, one additional period of 15 minutes be added for members of the Green Party.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

* * *

PETITIONS

IRAN

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to present a petition signed by 1,885 people, with 645 signatures coming from my home province of British Columbia. The petition reads, “We, the undersigned, concerned citizens across Canada, call upon the Government of Canada to take the matter of investigating the shooting down of Ukrainian passenger Flight 752, whose passengers were mostly citizens and residents of Canada, to the UN Security Council by soliciting support from friendly countries and to request support for an independent investigation.”

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present three petitions to the House today on behalf of Canadians across the country.

The first petition is with respect to Bill C-6. Petitioners recognize the need to ban conversion therapy. Harmful, coercive and degrading practices have no place in Canada. Their concern is with the fact that Bill C-6 would go much further than that, because the definition of conversion therapy in the bill is imprecise and overarching. This poorly written definition would restrict support available for LGBTQ Canadians and ban healthy conversations about sexuality and gender identity.

Canadians are asking the House to fix the definition, so that we can get this right.

● (1515)

ETHIOPIA

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am presenting today calls on the government to take action to end the violence in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Credible reports indicate that war crimes, such as the indiscriminate shelling of civilian towns and villages, extrajudicial killings, at least one large-scale massacre, looting and sexual vio-

Routine Proceedings

lence, have all occurred in Tigray. Petitioners are asking that the government engage directly and consistently with the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments and immediately call for an end to violence and for the restraint of all parties involved in the Tigray conflict. The world needs Canada to have a principled foreign policy and to promote and defend human rights across the world.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition I will present today draws attention to the human rights abuses Uighur people are subject to by the Community Party of China. Petitioners recognize the credible reports of genocide against the Uighur people. Uighurs are being subject to forced abortions and sterilizations, organ harvesting and arbitrary detention. I imagine the Canadians who signed this petition are pleased that the House passed a motion recognizing this genocide, but that they are disappointed by the shameful abstention of the Prime Minister and his cabinet on that vote. They are calling on the government to use the Magnitsky act and sanction those who are responsible for the heinous crimes being committed against the Uighur people. We must not stand by and watch this happen; the time to act is now.

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE SAFETY

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition on behalf of constituents in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country. To summarize, they reference Canada averaging 145 fatalities and 3,400 hospitalizations every year due to all-terrain vehicle rollover accidents. The use of crush protection device installations on these vehicles would reduce the number and severity of these accidents significantly. Other industrialized nations have recognized this issue and mandated implementation by manufacturers, safety authorities and industry users. Petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to require manufacturers to include crush protection devices on all new sales of all-terrain vehicles.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the first petition I am presenting today is from Canadians calling on the government to impose sanctions against individuals in Russia who are responsible for gross human rights abuses against Russian pro-democracy activists, such as Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

The petition also calls for sanctions to be placed against those who are interfering in Canada through malign influence operations such as intimidation campaigns targeting Canadians and that the Canadian government take additional steps to assist persecuted Russian activists and dissidents.

Routine Proceedings

The Canadian Russian community, particularly of I/We Russia, as well as central and eastern European communities in Canada, have done excellent work advocating for human rights and democracy in Russia. Canadians should heed the call of these pro-democracy activists and the government should take stronger action to address the abuses by the Russian government. For instance, Canada should sanction the corrupt oligarchs who continue to fund and support Vladimir Putin's repression and abuse of pro-democracy activists in Russia.

I have seven additional petitions to table.

● (1520)

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with respect to Bill C-6, which we are debating today. The petitioners want to see a ban on conversion therapy, but are concerned about problems with the definition and lack of clarity around issues like what is meant by “practice”, and the failure of the government to support reasonable amendments that would have clarified the definition with respect to what this does and does not apply to. In particular, the petitioners want to see the government and the House of Commons ban coercive degrading practices that are designed to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, amend Bill C-6 to fix the definition in order to ensure it does not include, for instance, private conversations where individual views about sexuality are expressed, and to allow parents to speak with their own children about sexuality, gender and to set house rules about sex and relationships.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition I am presenting is with respect to Bill C-7 that recently passed and the issues raised in it around euthanasia or medical assistance in dying for those with mental health challenges. The petitioners are very concerned about the decision of the government to add in euthanasia for those with mental health challenges at the last minute, when it had previously said it did not support these measures. They want to see the government do more to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment and recovery, not death.

The petitioners are also supportive of the idea of having a national, three-digit suicide prevention line.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition highlights the situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. The petitioners are very concerned about the humanitarian and human rights situation there and its severe impact on civilians. The petitioners want to see the government immediately call for an end to violence and restraint from all sides in the conflict and greater humanitarian access, advance strong investigations around war crimes and gross violations of human rights, engage directly and consistently with the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments on the conflict, and promote short- and long-term election monitoring.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fifth petition I am tabling today calls on the

government to recognize the genocide of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China, and to apply the Magnitsky act to those who are involved in this genocide.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the sixth petition I am tabling deals with the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China. The petitioners want the Government of Canada and the House of Commons to take additional steps in response to that persecution, including addressing the issue of organ harvesting. In particular, these petitioners highlight the need for legal sanctions and the use of the Magnitsky act against those involved in these persecutions.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition is in support of efforts to ban sex-selective abortion in Canada. It notes that Canadians strongly support these measures and that it is recognized in the health care profession that sex-selective abortion is a problem. This issue will be considered by the House in a vote in two days.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition is in support of Bill S-204, a bill currently before this House, which has just passed the Senate unanimously. Bill S-204 would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ where there has not been consent. This bill has passed the House unanimously in its current form as Bill S-240 in the last Parliament. Now we simply need to complete the reconciliation process by passing Bill S-204 in this Parliament. The petitioners are hoping this Parliament is the one that finally gets it done and deals with the abhorrent practice of forced organ harvesting and trafficking. It is an issue on which all parliamentarians agree and has had unanimous support in both Houses before in this form, so let us try to get it done in this Parliament.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be presenting one petition today on Bill C-6 that Canadians have brought to my attention.

The petitioners identify the definition of conversion therapy in the legislation as being too broad, noting it wrongly applies the label of conversion therapy to a broad range of practices, including counsel from parents, teachers and counsellors encouraging children to reduce their sexual behaviour. Further, they raise concerns that Bill C-6 could restrict the choices of all Canadians, including those from the LGBTQ community, concerning sexuality and gender by prohibiting access to any professional or spiritual support freely chosen to limit sexual behaviour or to detransition.

With that in mind, the petitioners call on the House of Commons to do the following: ban coercive and degrading practices designed to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity; ensure no laws discriminate against Canadians by limiting the services that they can receive based on their sexual orientation or gender identity; allow parents to speak with their children about sexuality and gender and allow free and open conversations about sexuality and sexual behaviour; and, finally, avoid criminalizing professional and religious counselling voluntarily requested and consented to by Canadians.

Bill C-6 requires improvement in order to balance the need to protect Canadians from harm while also respecting the freedom of all Canadians to freely discuss matters of sexuality with trusted family members, friends and/or professionals.

TC ENERGY

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present four pretty much identical petitions totalling over 3,350 signatures.

The petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to stop the TC Energy's proposed pump storage project on 4th Canadian Division Training Centre at base Meaford.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions to present today. The first one is timely, given the situation we find ourselves in with the discovery of the mass graves of children in Kamloops.

The petitioners call for Canada to bring in measures that would safeguard human life at every stage of human development. They call on the government to support measures that would protect human life. They note that all human life should be regarded with great respect, from conception to natural death.

• (1525)

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I have the honour to present today is from constituents across Canada.

The petitioners are concerned about the accessibility and impacts of violent and degrading sexually explicit material online and the impacts on public health, especially on the well-being of women and girls. They recognize that we cannot say we believe in preventing sexual violence toward women, while allowing pornography companies to freely expose our children to violent explicit material every day. This is a form of child abuse. As such, they note the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires Canada to develop

Routine Proceedings

the means to protect children from forms of media that are injurious to their well-being.

The petitioners therefore call on the House of Commons to require meaningful age verification on all adult websites.

FIRST NATIONS FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition I have to present today is from indigenous members of my riding.

The petitioners note that everyone is equal before the law and without discrimination. They state that the First Nations Financial Transparency Act is supposed to enhance accountability and transparency. However, when receiving federal funding, official first nation band membership is counted, but off-reserve band members face alienation, and are receiving limited funds and services.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to enforce the First Nations Financial Transparency Act and ensure that off-reserve band members are provided with equal levels of funding and services as on-reserve band members.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have to present is on Bill C-6. This petition is signed by Canadians across Canada who are concerned about Bill C-6, which we are debating today.

These Canadians oppose conversion therapy, but are concerned about the current definition of "conversion therapy" in Bill C-6. Like most Canadians, they want coercive and degrading therapies banned, however, the definition in Bill C-6 would limit private conversations and freely chosen supports to limit or decrease sexual activity that would be impacted.

The petitioners ask for coercive and degrading practices to be banned. In addition, they would like a more clear definition in Bill C-6 that would not criminalize voluntary conversations and services, including counselling. They also ask for parents to be allowed to speak to their children about sexuality and gender and to set house rules about sex and relationships.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have to present comes from Canadians across Canada who are opposed to the discriminatory practice of sex-selective abortion.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners note that sex selection is completely legal and that 84% of Canadians, regardless of their views on abortion, think that sex-selective abortion should be illegal. The petitioners state that several organizations around the world have recognized the damages and impacts of the absence of girls. Additionally, Canada's health care professionals recognize that sex selection is a problem in Canada.

The petitioners call for the quick passage of Bill C-233.

FIREARMS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition I have to present today is from Canadians across Canada who are concerned about the health and safety of Canadian firearms owners.

The petitioners recognize the importance of owning firearms and are concerned about the impacts of hearing loss caused by damaging noise levels from firearms and the need for noise reduction. They acknowledge that sound moderators are the only universally recognized health and safety device, which is criminally prohibited in Canada. Moreover, the majority of G7 countries have recognized the health and safety benefits of sound moderators in allowing them for hunting, sport shooting and noise pollution reduction.

The petitioners call on the government to allow firearms owners the option to purchase and use sound moderators for all legal hunting and sport shooting activities.

The Speaker: We have run out of time for petitions and will have to continue at the next session.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I have a very practical point of order. When one has filed with the table to present a petition electronically, does one have to refile to present on the next sitting day or can it be added to the list?

The Speaker: It will automatically transfer over to the next list.

I want to take this opportunity to mention that when members present petitions, to try to be as brief as possible. We have run out of time, and some members were waiting on the list. It makes it very difficult for them.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 610, 612, 613, 619 and 620.

[Text]

Question No. 610—**Mr. John Brassard:**

With regard to the awarding of the South West Asia Service Medal (SWASM), the General Campaign Star (GCS), the General Service Medal (GSM) and the South West Asia Service ribbon by the Minister of National Defence for service in Afghanistan: (a) how many (i) SWASMs, (ii) GSCs, (iii) GSMs, (iv) South West Asia ribbons, have been awarded to date, broken down by award; (b) how many requests for the SWASM have yet to be fulfilled; and (c) how many years of service are required to be eligible for the (i) SWASM, (ii) GSM, (iii) GCS, (iv) South West Asia Service ribbon, broken down by award?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National Defence is committed to recognizing the service and sacrifice of the brave women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces who participated in, and civilians who supported, Canada's military operations in Afghanistan.

The Canadian honours system recognizes their service and sacrifice by awarding service and campaign medals.

In response to part (a), as of December 31, 2020, National Defence awarded 12,760 recipients with the South-West Asia Service Medal; 32,646 recipients with the General Campaign Star—South-West Asia; and 5,867 recipients with the General Service Medal—South-West Asia.

National Defence recently changed its database that tracks awarded service medals. Statistics on medals awarded are now reported and tracked on an annual basis.

The General Campaign Star and General Service Medal are awarded with a ribbon specific to the operational theatre or type of service being recognized. Therefore, the ribbon for South-West Asia is not considered a separate award from the General Campaign Star—South-West Asia, nor the General Service Medal—South-West Asia.

In response to part (b), National Defence searched its awards database and found one pending application for the South-West Asia Service Medal for a retired member, which is currently being processed.

In response to part (c), the official description, eligibility, criteria, and history of the South-West Asia Service Medal, the General Campaign Star—South-West Asia, and the General Service Medal—South-West Asia are available online: i) <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/medals/medals-chart-index/south-west-asia-service-medal-swasm.html>; ii) <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/medals/medals-chart-index/general-campaign-star-south-west-asia-gcs-swa.html>; iii) <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/medals/medals-chart-index/general-service-medal-south-west-asia-gsm-swa.html>.

In response to part (c)(iv), as noted above, the ribbon for South-West Asia is not considered a separate award from the General Campaign Star—South-West Asia, nor the General Service Medal—South-West Asia.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 612—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:**

With regard to the government's original response and revised response to question Q-373 on the Order Paper: (a) which official signed the Statement of Completeness for the original response; (b) which official signed the Statement of Completeness for the revised response; and (c) if an official signed the Statement of Completeness for the revised response, why did Public Safety's response to the request made under Access to Information Act A-2020-00384 indicate that "Public Safety Canada was unable to locate any records"?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a), the official who signed the statement of completeness, SOC, for the original input provided by the Canada Border Services Agency, CBSA, is the vice-president, intelligence and enforcement branch.

The official who signed the SOC for the original input provided by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RCMP, is the senior director, strategic policy and government affairs.

In response to parts (b) and (c), no revised SOC was produced for the revised response as it did not require the agencies to consult new records, analysis or consultations.

Question No. 613—Mr. Chris d'Entremont:

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Small Craft Harbours program: (a) how much has been invested in the Harbour Authority of Little River, Digby County; and (b) how much will be invested over the next five years?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Small Craft Harbours program has invested \$40,366.50 in the Harbour Authority of Little River, Digby County since 2019, up to and including fiscal year 2020-21. It will invest \$50,580 over the next five years, based on existing contribution agreements between the harbour authority and the program.

Please note that the Harbour Authority of Little River ceased to exist in 2018, at which time it was replaced by the Digby Neck Harbour Authority Association. The investments cited in this response include those made or to be made to both entities.

Question No. 619—Mr. Warren Steinley:

With regard to the federal quarantine facility at the Hilton Hotel on Dixon Road near the Toronto Pearson Airport: (a) how much is the government paying the hotel to be a quarantine facility; (b) what were the total expenditures to make modification to turn the hotel property into a quarantine facility, including the cost of fencing and barricades; (c) what is the breakdown of (b) by line item; and (d) why was this specific property chosen to be a quarantine facility?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), on September 17, 2020, the Government of Canada launched a request for information, RFI, to seek input from industry about potential options and best practices for the third party provision of lodgings and/or management of services associated with federal quarantine sites. Any further breakdown of costs cannot be released at this time, as the information would hinder the prospective competitive process following the RFI.

Due to current contracting activities, including the potential competitive processes noted above, the exact breakdown of costs cannot be publicly disclosed at this time.

With regard to part (b), between April 1, 2020, and March 31, 2021, the federal government has spent \$285 million on enhanced

border and travel measures and isolation sites. These measures include the federal designated quarantine sites across Canada; a strengthened national border and travel health program, including enhanced compliance and enforcement; safe voluntary isolation spaces in municipalities; and enhanced surveillance initiatives to reduce COVID-19 importation and transmission at points of entry.

Due to current contracting activities, including potential competitive processes, the exact breakdown of costs cannot be publicly disclosed at this time.

With regard to part (c), due to current contracting activities, including potential competitive processes, the breakdown of (b) by line item cannot be publicly disclosed at this time.

With regard to part (d), the referenced hotel was chosen to be a designated quarantine facility because it met a set of site requirement criteria. Each designated quarantine facility is chosen based on minimum criteria, including proximity to the airport/port of entry and to an acute care hospital, and ability to meet the Public Health Agency of Canada's requirements to safely lodge travellers while they complete their mandatory quarantine/isolation.

Question No. 620—Mr. Warren Steinley:

With regard to quarantine requirements and a CTV report of April 12, 2021, that an individual returning to Canada contracted COVID-19 while staying at a quarantine hotel and subsequently infected his entire family: (a) how many individuals have contracted COVID-19 while staying at a quarantine hotel of quarantine facility since the program began; (b) if the government does not track how many individuals have contracted COVID-19 while at a quarantine hotel, why is such information not tracked; and (c) when an individual tests positive while at a hotel or facility, is the room required to be put out of service and not available for other guests for a certain period of time and, if so, what is the time period the room must be out of service and when was this requirement set?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), all federally designated quarantine facilities, DQFs, have strict infection prevention and control measures in place in order to safeguard the health of Canadians. There has not been any transmission of COVID-19 in DQFs in Canada.

The number of individuals who have contracted COVID-19 while staying in a government-approved accommodation, GAA, is not collected as it would be impossible to know whether an individual became infected with COVID-19 at a GAA, rather than during high-risk exposures such as during air travel.

Routine Proceedings

Even with valid negative pre-departure and on-arrival test results, some individuals subsequently test positive during their quarantine period. This is because the amount of virus or viral load of the person being tested affects the test result. A low viral load, which can occur in the very early stage of the disease or during the recovery phase, could give a false negative result. In other words, the virus could be present in the individual but not be detected through testing during some stages of the illness. As such, it is not unexpected that some travellers receive a positive day 8 test result.

Tests at day 1 and 8, previously day 10, are effective in preventing secondary transmissions. In addition, travellers must remain in quarantine for the full 14-day quarantine period. Their quarantine will only end once they have received a negative test result and completed the full 14-day quarantine, and as long as they have not developed any symptoms of COVID-19.

Mandatory quarantine and testing requirements are part of the Government of Canada's multi-layered strategy to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in Canada, and will continue to be part of enhanced measures.

With regard to part (b), this information is not collected because it would be impossible to know whether an individual became infected with COVID-19 at a GAA, rather than during high-risk exposures such as during air travel.

Positive results identified as part of the arrival testing program, day 1 and day 8, whether the person is in a GAA, DQF or at home, are collected by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

With regard to part (c), at GAAs and DQFs, rooms are thoroughly cleaned between guests, whether they are positive or negative.

In DQFs, the room is required to be put out of service and rendered unavailable for other guests for a period of 24 hours.

At GAAs, staff are advised to wait 24 hours before entering the room, or if 24 hours is not feasible, then to wait as long as possible. GAAs and DQFs are expected to meet a set of criteria, which include meeting infection prevention and control procedures and following cleaning guidelines. Staff are required to be trained on cleaning and disinfecting as per guidelines and know how to apply these best practices for cleaning public spaces as per instructions.

* * *

• (1530)

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 607 to 609, 611, 614 to 618 and 621 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 607—Ms. Kristina Michaud:

With regard to the Centennial Flame unveiled on July 1, 1967, on Parliament Hill in Ottawa: (a) what fuel is used to enable the flame to burn perpetually; (b) what is the price per cubic metre of the fuel used and, if applicable, how much gas is used annually to keep the flame burning; (c) what is the estimated amount of greenhouse gases emitted annually by (i) the flame itself, (ii) the infrastructure supporting the flame's operation; (d) since the unveiling of the Centennial Flame in 1967, has the government estimated the cumulative amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere; and (e) has the government purchased carbon credits to offset these greenhouse gas emissions and, if so, what is the total amount that has been spent to offset greenhouse gas emissions, broken down by (i) year, (ii) annual amount spent?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 608—Mr. Doug Shipley:

With regard to the Supplementary Estimates (A), (B) and (C), 2020-21 and the items listed under Privy Council Office as COVID-19 communications and marketing: (a) what was the total amount actually spent under this line item; (b) what is the detailed breakdown of how the money was spent, including a detailed breakdown by (i) type of expenditure, (ii) type of communications and marketing, (iii) specific message being communicated; (c) what are the details of all contracts signed under this line item, including the (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date, (iv) detailed description of goods or services, including the volume; and (d) was any funding under this line item transferred to another department or agency, and, if so, what is the detailed breakdown and contract details of how that money was spent?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 609—Mr. John Brassard:

With regard to training and education benefits provided by Veterans Affairs Canada: (a) of applications for the Veterans Education and Training Benefit, since April 1, 2018, (i) how many veterans have applied for the benefit, (ii) how many family members of veterans have applied for the benefit, (iii) how many applications for the benefit have been received, (iv) how many applications have been denied, (v) how much money have been awarded to veterans and their family members, broken down by fiscal year; and (b) for the Rehabilitation and Vocational Assistance Program, broken down by year since 2009, (i) how many veterans have applied for the program, (ii) how many veterans were accepted into the program, (iii) how many veteran's applications were denied, (iv) how much was paid to WCG Services to deliver the program, (v) how much was paid to March of Dimes to deliver the program?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 611—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:**

With regard to the Translation Bureau operations: (a) how many hours of simultaneous interpretation of parliamentary proceedings were provided each year since 2016, broken down by (i) sittings of the Senate, (ii) sittings of the House of Commons, (iii) meetings of Senate committees, (iv) meetings of House committees; (b) how many employees have provided simultaneous interpretation each year since 2016 (i) of parliamentary proceedings, (ii) in total; (c) how many freelance contractors have provided simultaneous interpretation each year since 2016 (i) of parliamentary proceedings, (ii) in total; (d) what are the minimum employment qualifications for simultaneous interpreters employed by the Translation Bureau, including, but not limited to, (i) education, (ii) work experience, (iii) profession accreditation, (iv) security clearance; (e) how many of the employees and freelance contractors identified in (b) and (c) meet the Translation Bureau's minimum employment qualifications listed in (d), including a breakdown of the qualifications specifically listed in (d)(i) to (iv); (f) what is the estimated number of total Canadians who currently meet the Translation Bureau's minimum employment qualifications listed in (d); (g) what are the language profiles of employees and freelance contractors, listed in (b) and (c), as well as the estimated number of Canadians in (f), broken down by "A language" and "B language" pairings; (h) what was the cost associated with the services provided by freelance simultaneous interpreters, identified in (c), each year since 2016, broken down by (i) professional fees, (ii) air fare, (iii) other transportation, (iv) accommodation, (v) meals and incidental expenses, (vi) other expenses, (vii) the total amount; (i) what are the expenses listed in (h), broken down by "A language" and "B language" pairings; (j) what percentage of meetings or proceedings where simultaneous interpretation was provided in each year since 2016 has been considered to be (i) entirely remote or distance interpretation, (ii) partially remote or distance interpretation, and broken down between (A) parliamentary, (B) non-parliamentary work; (k) how many employees or freelance contractors providing simultaneous interpretation have reported workplace injuries each year since 2016, broken down by (i) nature of injury, (ii) whether the meeting or proceeding was (A) entirely remote, (B) partially remote, (C) neither, (iii) whether sick leave was required and, if sick leave was required, how much; (l) how many of the workplace injuries identified in (k) have occurred during (i) sittings of the Senate, (ii) sittings of the House of Commons, (iii) meetings of Senate committees, (iv) meetings of House committees, (v) meetings of the Cabinet or its committees, (vi) ministerial press conferences or events; (m) what is the current status of the turnkey interpreting solution, using ISO-compliant digital communications services, which was, in 2019, projected to be available by 2021, and what is the current projected date of availability; (n) how many requests for services in Indigenous languages have been made in each year since 2016, broken down by (i) parliamentary simultaneous interpretation, (ii) non-parliamentary simultaneous interpretation, (iii) parliamentary translation, (iv) non-parliamentary translation; (o) what is the breakdown of the responses to each of (n)(i) to (iv) by (i) A language pairing, (ii) B language pairing; (p) how many of the requests for parliamentary simultaneous interpretation, listed in (n)(i), were (i) fulfilled, (ii) not fulfilled, (iii) cancelled; (q) how many days' notice was originally given of each service request which was not fulfilled, as identified in (p)(ii); (r) for each service request which was cancelled as listed in (p)(iii), (i) how soon after the request was made was it cancelled, (ii) how far in advance of the scheduled time of service was the request cancelled, (iii) what were the total expenses incurred; (s) how many documents have been translated with the use of machine translation, either in whole or in part, each year since 2016, broken down by original language and translated language pairings; and (t) how many of the machine-translated documents listed in (s) were translated for parliamentary clients, broken down by categories of documents, including (i) Debates, Journals, Order Paper and Notice Paper of the Senate and House of Commons, (ii) legislation, (iii) committee records, (iv) Library of Parliament briefing notes, (v) briefs and speaking notes submitted to committees by witnesses, (vi) correspondence, (vii) all other documents?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 614—Mr. Terry Dowdall:

With regard to the trips of the Minister of National Defence, broken down by each trip since November 4, 2015: (a) what are the dates, points of departure, and points of arrival for trips made with military search and rescue aircraft; and (b) what are the dates, points of departure, and points of arrival for trips using Canadian Armed Forces drivers (i) between the Vancouver International Airport and his personal residence, (ii) between his personal residence and the Vancouver International Airport, (iii) between the Vancouver International Airport and his constituency office, (iv) between his constituency office and the Vancouver International Airport, (v) between his constituency office and meetings with constituents, (vi) to and from personal appointments, including medical appointments, (vii) to and from the ministerial regional offices?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 615—Mr. John Brassard:

With regard to reports that some arriving air travelers are having their expenses for quarantining at a designated hotel or other quarantine facility covered by the government: (a) how many arriving travelers have had their quarantine expenses covered by the government since the hotel quarantine requirement began, broken down by airport point of entry; (b) what specific criteria is used by the government to determine which travelers are required to pay for their own hotel quarantine and which travelers have their quarantine paid for by the government; and (c) what are the estimated total expenditures by the government on expenses related to quarantining the travelers in (a), broken down by line item and type of expense?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 616—Mr. Len Webber:

With regard to expenditures on talent fees and other expenditures on models for media produced by the government since October 1, 2017, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity: (a) what is the total amount of expenditures; and (b) what are the details of each expenditure, including the (i) vendor, (ii) project or campaign description, (iii) description of goods or services provided, (iv) date and duration of the contract, (v) file number, (vi) publication name where the related photographs are located, if applicable, (vii) relevant website, if applicable?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 617—Mr. Paul Manly:

With regard to the government funding in the constituency of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, between October 21, 2019, and March 31, 2021: (a) what are the details of all the applications for funding, grants, loans, and loan guarantees received, broken down by the (i) name of the organization(s), (ii) government department, agency, or Crown corporation, (iii) program and any relevant sub-program, (iv) date of the application, (v) amount applied for, (vi) total amount of funding or loan approved; (b) what funds, grants, loans, and loan guarantees has the government issued and that did not require a direct application, broken down by the (i) name of the organization(s), (ii) government department, agency, or Crown corporation, (iii) program and any relevant sub-program, (iv) total amount of funding or loan approved; and (c) what projects have been funded by organizations responsible for sub-granting government funds, broken down by the (i) name of the recipient organization(s), (ii) name of the sub-granting organization, (iii) government department, agency, or Crown corporation, (iv) program and any relevant sub-program, (v) total amount of funding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 618—Mr. Warren Steinley:

With regard to reports, studies, assessments, and evaluations (herein referenced as deliverables) prepared for the government, including any department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity, by McKinsey and Company, Ernst and Young, or PricewaterhouseCoopers, since January 1, 2016: what are the details of all such deliverables, broken down by firm, including the (i) date that the deliverable was finished, (ii) title, (iii) summary of recommendations, (iv) file number, (v) website where the deliverable is available online, if applicable, (vi) value of the contract related to the deliverable?

(Return tabled)

Government Orders

Question No. 621—Mr. Warren Steinley:

With regard to the report that the government threatened to pull funding from the Halifax International Security Forum (HFX) if they awarded Tsai Ing-wen, the president of Taiwan with the John McCain Prize for Leadership in Public Service: (a) what are the details of all communications, formal or informal, between the government, including any ministers or exempt staff, and representatives of the HFX, and where there was any reference to Taiwan since January 1, 2020, including the (i) date, (ii) individuals participating in the communication, (iii) the senders and recipients, if applicable, (iv) type of communication, (email, text message, conversation, etc.), (v) summary of topics discussed; and (b) which of the communications in (a) gave the impression to HFX that its funding would be pulled if it awarded the prize to the president of Taiwan, and (i) has the individual who made the representation been reprimanded by the government, (ii) was that individual acting on orders or advice, either formal or informal, from superiors within the government, and, if so, who were the superiors providing the orders or advice?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Burnaby South.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to request an emergency debate on the discovery of 215 children buried at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School.

The discovery of those children last week is a sad reminder of Canada's genocidal actions against indigenous peoples.

First nations, survivors, elders, leaders, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and others are calling for action to confront this history and help bring about closure. Families and communities are discussing this important issue, and Parliament needs to do so as well.

[English]

Canadians were horrified to learn of this discovery. It is heart-breaking to think about the families that never knew what happened to their children, to first have to grapple with the loss of their children, who were stripped from them, stripped from their homes, their identity, their language stolen from them, and then to have to deal with the loss of these children. So many more indigenous communities around the country are also wondering what happened to their children.

I think about the memorials happening across the country, memorials where people are placing children's shoes to commemorate the lives lost, the flags flying at half-mast and indigenous elders who are conducting sacred ceremonies to guide the spirits of these children.

We know this mourning is incredibly important, and we mourn together the lives of these children, but we must move beyond just

mourning at the federal level, at the government level. We must move beyond symbolic gestures to concrete actions.

In this emergency debate, we can talk about the fact the government continues to fight indigenous kids and residential survivors in court. We can talk about the steps we can take to truly walk the path of truth and reconciliation, implementing the calls to action, only 12 of which have been implemented so far.

We can move beyond just symbolism and move to action by committing to funding the investigation and by working in partnership with indigenous communities of other potential sites like this. We can walk the path of reconciliation with concrete actions to commit to justice in the honour of those lives lost.

That is why I am calling for an emergency debate, for us to move beyond just words to concrete actions and to talk about what those actions might be.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Burnaby South for his intervention. However, I am not satisfied this request meets the requirements of the Standing Orders at this time.

* * *

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That a take-note debate on the tragic discovery of the remains of 215 children at a former residential school in British Columbia be held, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, on Tuesday, June 1, 2021, and that, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House: (a) members rising to speak during the debate may indicate to the Chair that they will be dividing their time with another member; and (b) no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

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

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

Hearing none, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1535)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy), be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: The member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands has 10 minutes remaining in questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Government Orders

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague for his reflections on the level of engagement we saw from the public with respect to the number of written briefs that were submitted to the committee and the way those written briefs were treated. Obviously, this is an issue on which there is a great deal of agreement in the House. Members want to see a conversion therapy ban.

It is also important that committees do their job and look at the law, the details, the intended and, perhaps, unintended consequences. It is with that in mind that many Canadians and stakeholder groups prepared and submitted written briefs that the committee could take into consideration, yet Liberal and NDP members voted against a Bloc motion that would have allowed for those committee briefs to be received as a part of clause-by-clause consideration.

I wonder if the member could reflect on the fact that all kinds of Canadians and stakeholder groups had constructed input on how to strengthen the legislation and that was completely ignored by the committee because it refused to take the time to look at those briefs.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. As far as I am aware, record submissions, at least in recent memory, were made to the parliamentary committee. Especially when we are talking about an issue such as conversion therapy, we need to ensure we put in the proper time to review the concerns and opinions expressed at committee through all those briefs.

It would have been absolutely appropriate for the committee to take the time to get the translation on the briefs, to read all the briefs and consider all the statements and evidence put forward before proceeding in the matter before us today that. Once again, the government is rushing things through because it cannot control its legislative calendar.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a quote to read from the website of the United Church of Canada, which states that conversion therapy is a widely “discredited practice” of trying to change someone’s “sexual orientation or gender identity” based on the premise that being gay or transgender is a disorder and can be cured. In policy and principle, the United Church of Canada affirms that human sexual orientation and gender at least are gifts from God.

I also would like to read from another website of GLA:D Canada, which goes into some detail about how many providers are frequently changing the terminology to avoid detection, that some of these terms can be changed to be harmless at first glance. It also details the reality that young members of the LGBTQ2S community are nearly 8.5 times more likely to attempt to commit suicide when subjected to harmful conversion therapy.

My colleague opposite referred to some legitimate practice. I would like to hear from the hon. member on what a legitimate practice might constitute if it does, in fact, aim to change somebody’s gender identity or sexual orientation.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, it is really important to just distinguish a few things. When individuals on their own have

chosen to seek counselling for a specific issue, then it is incumbent that they get the counselling they are seeking. The way the member put the question is that somehow a counsellor will try to force a specific ideology or position upon an individual, which is not the case.

We want to see a situation where individuals who have a specific problem in their lives and want to receive counselling, trying to get to a specific outcome, that it is set by them, not the counsellor. We have to ensure that their ability to do that is not impacted. There have been concerns this bill would do that.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is so unfortunate to hear my colleague make statements and quotes like “sexual behaviour counselling,” as if there is something inherently wrong in an individual living as who they are.

I am curious to know why my colleague violently opposes this fundamental human right and continues to utilize stereotypes and language that certainly do not help with the identity of people in the LGBTQ2IA community? They have much higher rates of suicide as a result of this kind of brutal rejection.

● (1540)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I would like to reiterate that there are a lot of people who have life-controlling issues, such as a person who is constantly cheating on their partner. They might want to seek counselling to help address that issue.

There has been a lot of feedback on this bill from a lot of different groups and organizations saying that a person who is a member of the LGBTQ community might not be able to get support if they are trying to honour their marriage or their union with their partner, and that because they have had an issue with extra-martial affairs, this is going to become a problem.

We want to make sure that they have equal access to counselling that all Canadians would have when they experience a life-controlling issue, such as cheating on their loved one.

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite mentioned Keira Bell, as well as the chilling effect he believes this bill might have.

I feel that the Keira Bell case in the United Kingdom is a landmark case that we would do well to take a look at. It talks about what has been a common occurrence for some people: A young girl, as she gets older and her body begins to change, feels uncomfortable and dislikes it. She could go through a period of anxiety and depression, and someone could tell her that changing would be the way out. Keira Bell went through changes including a double mastectomy. She deeply regrets it.

Could this member comment on the chilling effect that he mentioned, and how that might impact more cases like Keira Bell’s here in Canada with Bill C-6?

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Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, it is important that we consider testimony like that. We have heard from many people, including Dr. James Cantor, who is a member of the LGBTQ community.

He talked exclusively about the chill effect that it could have. I am going to quote him to make sure I get it right:

We will end up with clinicians...with a chill effect, simply unwilling to deal with this kind of issue; the service will become unavailable. Without a clear indication of what counts as an “exploration” and exactly what that means, anybody would have trouble going into this with the kind of confidence that a clinician needs in order to help their client.

He clearly points out that we want to make sure that a clinician has the full confidence to help somebody, particularly in that, where they have ability to take the time to make sure it is the right decision for them before they proceed, which in Keira Bell's case did not happen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, very quickly, does the member believe that we are who we are when we are born, or does he think that our sexual identity is a choice?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, the issue of the debate here today is Bill C-6. We want to make sure that people have full and equal access to the same supports around them.

When we look at the bill, we want to make sure that we look at all the different briefs that were submitted before committee so that we have the opportunity to hear what everybody is saying. Because the government was rushing through its agenda, we did not have the chance to consider all the different briefs. We should be able to hear from all the different people who are talking about a lot of different situations that have arisen.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I hope the hon. members are aware that the British case they have been citing is under appeal and is not settled law in Britain.

My question is for the member. If he is opposed to attempts at conversion therapy, why does he think that trying to repress someone's identity or repress their sexual orientation is an acceptable behaviour?

Where does he find anything in this bill, after it was amended, that would prevent conversations affirming people's choices?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, what we want to see is that people have the ability to get the help that they are seeking on their own. We want to make sure they have the ability to get the help they need. That is what we are trying to do here today.

We are trying to raise concerns that Canadians, reaching out to our office, have had. I have heard from hundreds of Canadians who have the same concern. We want to make sure we have equal access to counselling. This bill is creating a situation where one group of Canadians could get certain types of counselling that they chose, and other types of Canadians could not get the counselling they would like to have.

• (1545)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker,

I will be sharing my time with the member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Pride Month starts tomorrow in my home province of Ontario, and I can think of no more opportune time to be working on the passage of Bill C-6 in the House of Commons. During Pride, LGBTQ2 Canadians celebrate who they are and their freedom to identify how they wish and love whomever they want, but there remain those who would deny the LGBTQ2 community's basic rights: those who believe that sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression can and should be changed to fit the narrow idea of what is “normal” or “natural” through the practice of conversion therapy. Bill C-6 would put an end to this.

By criminalizing the practice of conversion therapy, our government is making a statement. We are stating clearly that conversion therapy is degrading, abusive and discriminatory, and the lifelong trauma it causes must come to an end. I have heard this call from my constituents in Parkdale—High Park and from those who believe in equality and in ending stigma right around the country. On the eve of Pride 2021, I hope that all colleagues in the House can agree that a practice based on age-old myths and prejudicial stereotypes about the LGBTQ2 community has no place in Canada.

Now let me turn to the bill itself. It proposes reforms that would comprehensively protect children from the known harms of conversion therapy, and protect Canadians from commercialization of the practice and from being forced to undergo it.

[Translation]

These reforms were inspired by a growing movement against conversion therapy led by survivors and supported by community allies, researchers and experts, many of whom shared their knowledge and experiences with the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights as we studied the bill.

This broad body of work inspired important amendments at committee and highlighted the evidence-based findings, namely that conversion therapy is harmful to people subjected to it. Bill C-6 seeks to stop this affront to human dignity and is an integral part of our ongoing efforts to protect LGBTQ2 individuals.

[English]

As many have rightly pointed out, the origins of conversion therapy betray its discriminatory and harmful ends. I want to highlight the testimony of Jack Saddleback. When I was at the justice committee, he poignantly reminded us in his testimony of the history of conversion therapy in Canada. It is inextricably linked to the erosion of indigenous culture and understanding of gender and sexual diversity, and to the suffering of two-spirit youths in residential schools, which is something we have all been thinking about a great deal over the past several days. As we reflect on the harm this bill is intended to prevent, we cannot forget the personal intergenerational trauma endured by two-spirit individuals and the communities for whom “conversion” has often been synonymous with assimilation.

By the 1980s and 1990s, the practice of conversion therapy had become prominent in this country. Even as we adopted the charter in 1982 and strengthened our collective commitment to protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of Canadians, the inherent dignity and quality of LGBTQ2 youths' and adults' lives continued to be threatened by interventions that vilified and pathologized their differences. These interventions sought to change who they were.

In his testimony and memoir, *The Inheritance of Shame*, survivor Peter Gajdics described in no uncertain terms the trauma he experienced as a gay man subjected to conversion therapy between 1989 and 1995. He recalled being virtually imprisoned in a “cult-like house” and subjected to prolonged sessions of primal scream therapy, near-lethal doses of medication and “re-parenting” sessions to heal his “broken masculinity”. When none of these methods worked, he was subjected to aversion therapy to suppress his homosexual desires. In his words, these were weapons selected to wage “a war against his sexuality”.

The names, means and methods of conversion therapy have changed over the years, often in an attempt to escape intensifying scrutiny and scientific condemnation. We heard this raised in the questions posed to the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands. However, the practice's flawed and hateful premise has persisted: that LGBTQ2 persons' sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are disordered and must be “fixed” or “rehabilitated” in order for them to live fulfilling and worthy lives. The brief submitted to the justice committee jointly by Dr. Travis Salway and the research team at the Centre for Gender and Sexual Health Equity referenced this point.

• (1550)

In his report entitled, “Conversion Therapy in Canada: A Guide for Legislative Action”, Dr. Wells underscores this point. We also have evidence from the UN Independent Expert 2020 Report, which concluded that conversion practices “inflict severe pain and suffering, resulting in long-lasting psychological and physical damage [and] are inherently degrading and discriminatory. They are rooted in the belief that LGBT persons are somehow inferior and that they must at any cost modify their orientation or identity to remedy that supposed inferiority”.

The UN Independent Expert recognizes that all forms of conversion therapy are dehumanizing and harmful, regardless of whether they purport to make a person heterosexual or cisgender. The report echoes Florence Ashley's warning to Canadian legislators to “reject any attempt to separate trans conversion practices from gay conversion practices”.

As Florence Ashley notes in one of their briefs, “these practices share a history and significant overlap in their contemporary forms. Neither trans nor cisgender LGBTQ can be adequately protected without fully protecting the other.”

[Translation]

That is precisely why the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights amended Bill C-6 in order to clarify that the bill has always sought to protect all LGBTQ2 communities.

Survivors and experts told us that the efforts to reduce and suppress the gender expression of transgender, queer and two-spirit

people are part of broader interventions designed to “make” them cisgender. The amendments made to the bill's preamble and the definition of conversion therapy to include the mention of “gender expression” reflect the major concerns of all stakeholders.

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In response to the experience and warnings of stakeholders with regard to the nature of conversion therapy, the Standing Committee on Justice also amended the offence regarding advertising in order to target the promotion of conversion therapy, namely the promotion of its underlying premise, which is hateful and unscientific.

The proposed offence clearly targets the discriminatory public messaging associated with the advertising of specific conversion therapy services and the promotion of conversion therapy in general.

[English]

I am very pleased that the justice committee strengthened this bill, despite many attempts by the official opposition to both delay the bill and stop it. I am particularly grateful to the survivors, advocates and allies who have come forward to inform the process. Through tireless advocacy, they have shed light on a glaring legislative gap in the protection of the inherent dignity and equality of all LGBTQ2 people. It is a gap that has allowed hateful narratives to fester and dehumanizing practices to go unchecked, and a gap that this legislation is carefully designed to fill.

Practices that negate the diversity of the human experience instead of celebrating that experience have absolutely no place in our country. Bill C-6 seeks to end such practices, including by promoting values that are fundamental to what it means to be Canadian: equality, dignity, diversity and respect for difference. Let us join together to further those values in support of Bill C-6.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would note parenthetically that the member said the bill was delayed at committee by Conservatives. However, the bill was passed in one meeting of clause by clause on the same day that many written briefs were received from witnesses. Passing the entire bill in one sitting can hardly be described as delaying the bill, especially since a day of debate has not been called for the bill in the House since then: over five months ago.

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Our contention is that conversion therapy should be banned, and further that the bill misdefines the practice of conversion therapy so as to ban things that are not conversion therapy. In particular, and uniquely, compared with many other conversion therapy bans around the world as well as at the provincial and municipal levels, the bill includes as conversion therapy any effort, conversation or practice that has as its objective reducing sexual behaviour or non-cisgender expression.

I could think of many situations in which people may have a conversation that involves suggestions around reducing sexual behaviour or modifying sexual behaviour in certain contexts. That is not conversion therapy. A person saying to another person that they should be single for a while and take some time for themselves, or a person saying to another person any number of things about such a thing, is completely different from what conversion therapy actually is.

Will the member at least take seriously the arguments that are being made here that conversion therapy should be banned, but that Bill C-6 is flawed as a proposed law, and that the committee maybe should have read some of the written briefs that were submitted, which might have had some constructive suggestions about how to fix it?

• (1555)

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his contributions, and I can assure him that, notwithstanding the efficacy of the clause-by-clause analysis, there were definitely efforts to delay and potentially stop this bill on the part of his colleagues.

With respect to the question he raised, what I would say is that we do take it seriously. We have said repeatedly that we are not aiming to prevent conversations that are aimed at exploring someone's identity, including conversations with friends, family members, teachers, social workers, psychologists, religious leaders and so on. That evidence came through at the committee meetings, which I attended in their entirety.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, the word “promotion” was added at the justice committee to the ban on advertising conversion therapy. Unfortunately, this wording encompasses simple verbal communication, meaning that even private conversation among family members would be included. Because of the government's broad definition of conversion therapy, which is not used anywhere else in the world, private conversations would then fall under their jurisdiction.

First, the Liberals want to regulate the internet under Bill C-10. Now they want to regulate private conversations in Bill C-6. Why does the Liberal government think it can tell Canadians what they can watch, post or discuss in the privacy of their own homes?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I just find this unfortunate. Perhaps it feeds that member's narrative in her own riding to spread disinformation or untruths about what we were doing as a government, but Bill C-10 would not affect individual users of social media, which we have said about 45 to 50 times every day in the House of Commons.

This bill would not regulate private conversations with a parent, a teacher or a religious leader. What it does do is ban a harmful and degrading practice, whether it would be forced on an adult or performed on a minor. Those are important steps in 2021, when we believe that everyone has the right to be free to love whomever they want.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the things that was pointed out at committee is that there were over 300 briefs submitted. The clause-by-clause was finished before the translation was even done on those 300 briefs, so it feels like this bill is being rammed through without due consideration. Many people came and shared their concern around the definition of conversion therapy, particularly around the word “behaviour” being in there.

Is the member not concerned that we have not heard from all Canadians? Is he concerned that we have ignored 300 briefs at committee and we are continuing to push this forward?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I would simply put it to the member opposite that, when briefs are received by the committee, they are also received by Parliament. Those briefs are a matter of public record and are available to all of us for the purposes of informing the debate we are now having. To purport that those briefs have been ignored is categorically false and untrue.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by acknowledging that I am joining the House from the riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabeg and Neutral peoples. I also wish to reflect the historical acceptance of gender-variant peoples and diverse sexual identities within indigenous communities in pre-contact times.

The last two initials that have been added to a long string of letters that we now identify as communities stand for “two-spirited”. The sense that a person can have two spirits and is therefore regarded within a community as exceptionally spiritual is something that I believe we can learn from. In most indigenous communities, two-spirit people are seen, loved and respected as unique individuals.

I rise today in the House for the third reading of this important bill. I am proud to speak in favour of Bill C-6, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding conversion therapy. The bill proposes to put an end to this damaging practice. The bill sends a clear message to any person or organization advocating or practising conversion therapy that conversion therapy is unacceptable in Canada.

Today, I will be speaking on the importance of this legislation, how this so-called therapy has no place in our society and how we need to protect the health and safety of everyone, most importantly, our youth. I will speak about what the legislation will do, and I will address the fact that this bill will not prohibit conversations or criminalize people's thoughts or opinions. Rather it would ban a practice that says one's identity is wrong and therefore needs to be changed. That is what would be banned. It is critically important that we do so.

Respecting equality means promoting a society in which everyone is recognized as deserving of respect. It is about creating a culture that allows people the freedom to be who they are, to love who they love, to love themselves and to be loved and accepted by not just their families but also by society. That is the message we are sending with Bill C-6.

Conversion therapy is a cruel exercise that stigmatizes and discriminates against Canada's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and two-spirit communities. This so-called therapy refers to misguided efforts to change the sexual orientation of bisexual, gay and lesbian individuals to heterosexual; change a person's gender identity to cisgender; or repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviour.

It suggests that a sexual orientation other than heterosexual, and that a gender identity other than cisgender, can and must be corrected. This type of discriminatory message stigmatizes LGBTQ2 individuals and violates their dignity and their right to equality. The idea that someone can and should be changed is rooted in homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Simply put, this is a discriminatory practice that is out of step with Canadian values.

Conversion therapy has been discredited and denounced by professional associations as harmful, especially to children. The Canadian Psychiatric Association has stated it opposes the use of conversion therapy. The Canadian Pediatric Society has identified the practice as "clearly unethical". The Canadian Psychological Association opposes the practice and notes, "Scientific research does not support [its] efficacy".

In fact, no organization of health professionals in Canada currently approves the practices of conversion therapy, though provincial health plans will allow for the practice of conversion therapy as part of the public health care system.

People and organizations who do advocate for these kinds of practices believe the misconception that some people are of lesser value because of their non-heterosexual orientation or their non-cisgender identity or expression. The idea that they should be forced to change is deeply misguided.

The bill would define conversion therapy as a practice, treatment or service to change a person's sexual orientation to heterosexual or gender identity to cisgender, or to repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviour.

I note that Bill C-6's proposed definition of conversion therapy is restricted to practices, treatments or services that are aimed at a particular process that is changing a fundamental part of who a person is. The bill would criminalize causing minors to undergo conversion therapy, removing minors from Canada to undergo conversion

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therapy abroad, causing a person to undergo conversion therapy against their will, profiting or receiving a material benefit from the provision of conversion therapy and advertising an offer to provide conversion therapy.

I have had many conversations with constituents about their ideas and their concerns. The people I spoke with who were not supportive at first were appreciative when I explained what the bill does not do. Here is what the bill is not. The bill does not prohibit conversations about sexuality between individuals and their parents, family members, spiritual leaders or anyone else. Nothing in the bill limits a person's right to their own point of view on sexual orientation and gender identity, nor the right to express that view including, for example, in private conversations between individuals struggling with their sexual orientation or gender identity with counsellors, family members, friends or religious officials.

● (1600)

I repeat that nothing in this law bans these kind of legitimate discussions about one's identity or finding one's identity. Rather, it would criminalize a practice that is harmful to Canadians and that has no place in our country. It is young people who suffer the greatest harm from the attempts to force them to be someone they are not. For queer youth, the idea that they need to be fixed can and does contribute to self-hate and fear of rejection by family and friends, which are both very damaging to mental health.

There are many negative impacts associated with conversion therapies. They are linked to a variety of psychosocial outcomes, including depression, anxiety and social isolation. The impacts are profound. A person who has undergone conversion therapy, especially a young person, can experience lifelong trauma. A person will feel like they are not worthy or that they must be ashamed of their identity. They will feel like they must live a lie or even that they do not deserve to live, leading to suicidal thoughts or behaviours. We cannot and will not tolerate this in Canada as we move forward.

I want everyone in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga and throughout Canada to know that they are accepted. I will do everything in my power to make sure they are safe and have the opportunity to have their voices heard. It has been important for me not only to listen, but also to understand, learn and share what I have learned. I have attended seminars and festivals, spoken at pride events and held multiple virtual town halls to further discussions about our LGBTQ2 community. I have also taken the voices and ideas of my constituents to Ottawa.

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Respecting equality means promoting a society in which everyone is recognized as equally deserving of respect and consideration. I am proud that our community here in Waterloo region is moving forward together. The fact that pride flags will be flying in both public and Catholic schools for the first time sends a strong message of support for our youth.

Arts organizations have been on the forefront of acceptance and advocacy, and I am sure our artists will continue to lead their voices for equality. A memory I am especially grateful for was the day that I proudly drove to Wilmot township with my own pride flag in hand to donate it to the ceremony last June. It was publicly raised and unfurled for the first time in the township's history.

In closing, we have come a long way as a society, but there is still much work to do. Let us set an example for Canadians and do this work together. Today's debate is important because, the sooner society accepts everyone's rights, the sooner we let people know we accept them for who they are, not who we think they should be. That will lead to empowering individuals to contribute their talents and their ideas to our community. When we celebrate our children for who they are, they do better and we become better as a nation. I urge all members of this House to support this important bill.

• (1605)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to get to the nub of the question as it relates to this bill. The member spoke about what, in his view, the bill does not do. He read out a series of exclusions. It does not apply to private conversations. It does not apply to the expression of personally held views on sexuality. These are things members of the government have said.

Of course, what we are voting on is the law, not the statements of members or what is on the justice department website. It is what is in the law. It was telling at committee that Conservatives proposed an amendment to take some of that language he and other members have been using about what it does not apply to. We wanted to simply take those words and put them in the text of the bill.

We proposed an amendment to say that conversion therapy would not include the expression of views on sexual orientation, sexual feelings or gender identity, such as when various people provide support to persons struggling with sexual orientation, sexual feelings or gender identity. We took language from the justice department, and Liberals voted against that amendment. In fact, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore said he was concerned that the amendment would defeat the purpose of the bill.

Why did Liberal members vote against that clarity? The member says it does not apply in these cases, yet his members voted against having that clarification in the text of the bill.

Mr. Tim Louis: Madam Speaker, there is a big difference between having conversations with people and forcing someone to undergo so-called therapy. I am hearing in this House over and over again that the idea of forcing a practice onto people, especially children, is something that everyone opposes. It seems like everyone is on the same side in that respect.

We want to make sure we are protecting our youth, protecting the vulnerable people in our community and not restricting support. I

want to make that very clear. The bill is not prohibiting conversations between individuals and their parents, family members or spiritual leaders.

I have had many conversations, and that is one of the deeper conversations I have had with constituents. That was their concern. They wanted to make sure that the rights of their parenting were not infringed upon in their conversations and that conversations with spiritual leaders would not be infringed upon. I assured them that they would not be. This legislation, which was worked on, supports that. We are only banning a practice, not conversations.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question for the hon. member pertains to some of the work we have been doing. This is another step in the journey of ensuring that all Canadians are able to be their true authentic selves.

What are the other things the member is doing within his riding and the Region of Waterloo to ensure that we are having meaningful conversations so that we can build back consciously inclusive?

• (1610)

Mr. Tim Louis: Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for her advocacy and leadership on this. I happen to be the member for the riding next to hers, and we work well together as a region. I mentioned that the Waterloo region is flying the pride flag at public and Catholic schools, and the minister is leading the way on that.

What is also integral are the virtual town halls. I have had 30 to 35 virtual town halls, where I invite people for conversations and have special guests. The minister was one of the people who came, and we had good discussions. I have spoken with members from OK2BME, KW Counselling and various other organizations. This week I will have another town hall to discuss LGBTQ rights.

We are having good conversations that Canadians need to have to make sure that everyone feels secure, accepted and protected. I will continue to work hard, and I know the minister will as well.

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I will quickly raise a point. Earlier today a Liberal member mentioned that conversion therapy could include prayer and religious rights. I do not fault her for saying that, because the Canadian Psychological Association has said the same, which the Liberals linked to, and Australia's recent conversion therapy ban specifically includes prayer-based practice.

If a pastor was to teach traditional sexuality on an ongoing basis and perhaps pray with people who voluntarily attended a class for it on an ongoing basis, would that be conversion therapy?

Mr. Tim Louis: Madam Speaker, I will repeat that nothing in this law would ban those kinds of legitimate discussions about one's identity or finding one's identity. It would criminalize a practice that is harmful to Canadians and a practice that has no place in this country. I will continue to say that.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure and humility that I agreed to rise today to speak to Bill C-6 at third reading in the House of Commons.

Bill C-6 seeks to discourage and denounce conversion therapy by criminalizing certain activities associated with it in order to protect the human dignity and equality of all—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I apologize to the hon. member for interrupting, but there seems to be a problem with the interpretation. Could the member unplug his microphone and then plug it back in?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Is it working now?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is working.

The member can start his speech over again.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, it is with humility that I agreed to rise today to speak to Bill C-6 at third reading in the House of Commons.

This bill seeks to discourage and denounce conversion therapy by criminalizing certain activities associated with it in order to protect the human dignity and equality of Canadians. It seeks to amend the Criminal Code so as to forbid anyone from advertising an offer to provide conversion therapy; causing a person to undergo conversion therapy without the person's consent; causing a child to undergo conversion therapy; doing anything for the purpose of removing a child from Canada with the intention that the child undergo conversion therapy outside Canada; and receiving a financial or other material benefit from the provision of conversion therapy.

When we seek election to the House of Commons, we are full of good intentions to help our fellow citizens. We think our past experiences will help us deal with every subject that will arise. I have a confession to make: We are a bit naive to think that we have seen it all in politics just because we served at the municipal or provincial level or worked in all kinds of fields.

Since 2015, I have learned a lot about many issues that affect all aspects of our society. From medical assistance in dying to the government's reaction to a global pandemic that no one saw coming, we are always surprised by the variety of subjects on which we have to speak and on which we are not always as prepared as we would like.

I was born into a middle-class family in Sherbrooke. Growing up, I had all sorts of jobs, including reporter, computer salesman and mayor of Thetford Mines, to name a few, but none of those jobs ever really involved regular interaction with members of the LGBTQ2 community. It is only in recent years, when I really embraced my political career more fully, that I came to have more and more contact with representatives of that community.

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That does not mean that I never knew anyone who was part of that community. I have some family members and friends who are openly gay or lesbian. However, I never really talked with them about their daily reality and their interactions with others.

Like many of us, in school, I unfortunately witnessed students laughing, taunting and bullying certain young people who were different. Everyone knows how cruel kids used to be in the past and how cruel they can be today.

What most surprised and angered me was when I found out right here in the House that there are therapies designed to force young people who are in the process of figuring out who they are to undergo so-called treatment to prevent them from becoming who they truly are.

I have read personal accounts of conversion therapy that touched me deeply. I immediately asked myself what I would do if it were one of my children. That is why I wanted to speak to this issue today. I have three wonderful children, and I want all the best for them. They are grown up now.

As I said at second reading of Bill C-6, I love them for who they are, not for who I might wish they were. I love them because they are whole, independent people who make their own choices. Of course, as a father, I might try to influence their choices. I can help them make good choices and help them get back up again when they make poor choices. For my wife and me, our most important job as parents is to be there for them no matter what.

When I found out about conversion therapy, I wondered if it would ever occur to me as a father to want to change who they are. The answer is never. As a father, nothing could make me want to change who they are. Never ever would it occur to me to pay for them to undergo therapy to change who they are. I can pay to help them deal with the vagaries of life, but I want them to deal with those challenges as they are, not as who I might want them to be.

● (1615)

I am clear on this and always have been: Life can lead us to make bad choices, but it cannot allow us to choose who we are. Sexual orientation and gender are not a matter of choice, in my opinion. I have read accounts from young people who have been put through conversion therapy. I can assure my colleagues without the slightest hesitation that, as a father, I would never subject my children to such treatment. Those are my values right now and what I inherently believe is the right thing to do, based on the knowledge I have today.

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When I found out about conversion therapy, I wanted to know more. As I mentioned earlier, I honestly had never heard of it until the subject was brought up here in the House of Commons. I had to do my own research. Unfortunately, there is little to no research on conversion therapy in Quebec. Its consequences on Quebec and on members of Quebec's LGBTQ+ community are not well documented either, unfortunately.

I carefully reread some of the testimony on Bill C-6 at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. What I read was deeply disturbing. I will read some excerpts of the testimony from some witnesses, particularly Erika Muse, who says she is a survivor of transgender conversion therapy.

She testified that she underwent conversion therapy at the now-closed youth gender clinic at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto. She was a patient there for seven years, from age 16 to 23. The doctor who treated her denied her trans-affirming health care in the form of both hormones and surgery until she was 22. Erika said:

[He] instead put me through what he has termed “desistance treatment” for trans youth. He interrogated me in talk therapy for hours at a time, inquisitorially attacking, damaging and attempting to destroy my identity and my self-esteem, and to make me ashamed and hateful of myself.

This young woman criticized Canada for exporting this practice to other countries. Conversion therapy has gone by all sorts of other names, such as autogynephilia, rapid-onset gender dysphoria, watchful waiting and desistance therapy, but, as Erika said:

They all have one thing in common. They're all conversion therapies and practices for trans people. They're attempts to define being trans as wrong, bad and something to be stopped, and they are efforts to stop trans people from living our own lives.

Reading first-hand accounts like that certainly does make us want to change things. I believe that, in a society like ours, it is completely unacceptable to force people to undergo therapy to change who they are.

The government could have achieved more of a consensus in the House of Commons for this bill. Unfortunately, despite the amendments proposed by the Conservative Party and the efforts made to appeal to the government party, it seems that petty politics prevailed. The House could have reached a unanimous agreement.

The Conservative Party brought forward amendments that I thought made sense in order to achieve consensus on the scope of the bill, particularly by protecting private discussions with parents, health professionals and various pastoral counsellors. I will have the opportunity to come back to this later.

I want to begin by explaining why I personally believe that conversion therapy of any kind has no place in Canada or anywhere else in the world.

• (1620)

In 2012, the Ordre des psychologues du Québec issued a warning about conversion therapy. I want to share an excerpt from this report, which deals with the ethical, deontological and illegal considerations of these practices:

Research on these issues has shown that it would be unethical to offer homosexual people wishing to undergo psychotherapy a procedure designed to change their sexual orientation as a treatment option. Not only is this practice unproven, but it

also runs the risk of creating false hope and could cause more suffering when the treatment inevitably fails.

Furthermore, offering conversion therapy, especially if the person did not explicitly request it, may reinforce the false belief that homosexuality is abnormal, worsen the distress or shame some feel about not conforming to expectations, and undermine self-esteem. Research shows that procedures designed to change sexual orientation may have a significant negative impact and cause greater distress than that for which the person originally sought psychotherapy....

The report is referring to depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation.

I will continue:

Therefore, it is more appropriate to provide psychotherapy for the purpose of treating depression or anxiety, relieving distress, supporting self-esteem, and helping the person deal with difficulties they may be experiencing, thus fostering self-actualization regardless of their sexual orientation.

That makes perfect sense, and it is a great lead-in for the bill to criminalize conversion therapy in Canada. I can also point to the position of the Quebec government, which has made clear its intention to ban conversion practices in the province. I believe that reflects the fact that the majority of Quebecers want to put an end to these practices. The Quebec government's Bill 70 seeks to prohibit anyone from soliciting a person, whether free of charge or for payment, to engage in a process of converting their sexual orientation.

Once the law becomes law, offenders will face a fine of up to \$50,000, or even \$150,000 for a corporation. Quebec is ready to do this, and other jurisdictions in Canada have already done it, such as the City of Vancouver. I feel that is what we need to do, because we have reached that point.

It is estimated that at least 47,000 men and women in Canada have undergone conversion therapy. Unfortunately, we know little about the number of cases in Quebec because the phenomenon is not really tracked. We have a duty as parliamentarians to protect the most vulnerable members of our communities, including members of the LGBTQ community who have been victims of degrading, dehumanizing practices designed to change their sexual orientation against their will.

It is clear that a federal ban is what it will take to put an end to this kind of practice nationwide. Health professionals and health organizations around the world have expressed concerns about conversion therapy.

In 2012, the World Health Organization issued a press release stating that conversion therapy is “a serious threat to the health and well-being of affected people”.

The Canadian Psychological Association took a similar stance in 2015, stating that “[c]onversion or reparative therapy can result in negative outcomes such as distress, anxiety, depression, negative self-image, a feeling of personal failure, difficulty sustaining relationships, and sexual dysfunction”.

From a global perspective, conversion therapy is harmful and wrong. This practice should and has to be completely banned.

No Canadian, no matter their age or history, should be put in a position where their identity is challenged and questioned. Above all, no one should be threatened or otherwise forced to undergo this type of therapy against their will. We know, and I have previously stated, that this practice can humiliate these people and force them to feel ashamed of who they are. That is unacceptable.

• (1625)

Allow me to quote another witness who appeared at committee, Peter Gajdics, who wanted to make recommendations for Bill C-6. He told us about his experience seeing a licensed psychiatrist. He was a legal adult at the time, as he was 24 years old when his therapy began and 31 when it ended. This is what he had to say:

I had already come out as gay before I met this psychiatrist. After starting counselling with him, he told me that my history of childhood sexual abuse had created a false homosexual identity and so my therapy's goal would be to heal old trauma in order, as he said, to correct the error of my sexual orientation and revert to my innate heterosexuality.

His methods then included prolonged sessions of primal scream therapy, multiple psychiatric medications to suppress my homosexual desires, injections of ketamine hydrochloride followed by re-parenting sessions to heal my broken masculinity, and when none of his methods worked, aversion therapy.

At their highest dosages he was prescribing near-fatal levels of these medications and I overdosed.

It is unacceptable to hear this kind of testimony in a civilized country like Canada. Several other similar testimonies come to us from across the country, while many people have spoken out in public forums about the effects this practice has had on their lives.

One person said that they were scarred by the experiences they had during a conversion therapy retreat that lasted a single weekend, some years ago. The people who participated in this kind of therapy feel as if they will never be able to forget the experience, saying how difficult it is to deal with what happened during the therapy, rather than the reason why they participated in the first place.

They say that many of the activities they participated in were traumatizing. For example, some people were forced to walk a great distance while being verbally harassed by therapy organizers because of their lifestyle, to unleash their anger by violently hitting a punching bag with a baseball bat, or to recount instances of sexual abuse they lived through. It would seem the objective was to diminish their feelings and emotions.

All of those participants noted that, in some cases, the objective was to recondition them and fundamentally alter them. For others, conversion therapy involved being taught not to act on or follow their natural desires. There are plenty of examples like that, and this type of therapy and the activities associated with it also caused a lot of harm to participants, such as nightmares, depression and suicidal thoughts.

Clearly, we are all against forced conversion therapy. The government could have gotten even more members of the House on board had it taken into account the comments it received when the first bill to ban conversion therapy was introduced.

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Originally, the Department of Justice website clearly indicated that private conversations between a parent and child were protected. The current bill is not as explicit, however, and the amendments proposed by my colleagues at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights were rejected. These amendments would have made it possible to achieve a broader consensus and support, which would have made it even easier to pass Bill C-6.

We did not delay the bill, as the Liberals like to say. That is completely false. We wanted to have a constructive discussion to obtain the broadest possible consensus on Bill C-6. That is why we took the opportunity during the committee study to present amendments. Unfortunately, the Liberals decided not to support them and not to achieve that broader consensus.

In closing, I do not identify with an LGBTQ+ group myself, so I cannot claim to know what a person must feel like when they are ostracized, bullied and ridiculed because of who they are. However, as a father and a Quebecker, I can say that it is high time that this country put an end to conversion therapy because of the harm it has done under the guise of doing something good and, more importantly, to prevent it from doing any more harm in the future.

• (1635)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my esteemed colleague for his incredibly heartfelt speech. My colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable spoke as a father and, quite honestly, I think he and I agree in many ways on the issue we are talking about.

He said that we are a bit naive to think we have seen it all in politics. I agree that in most professions, and in every aspect of life in general, no one has ever seen it all. It is important to say that.

In fact, one of the things that fascinates me is that members of a party that has the word “progressive” in its name, the Progressive Conservative Party, are praising conversion therapy.

My question is simple. I want to know what my hon. colleague says to his friends in his own progressive caucus when those same friends tell him that conversion therapy must be available, that it is a service that must be accessible to everyone.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I would like to correct my colleague by telling him it is the Conservative Party of Canada. I am a proud representative of the Conservative Party of Canada.

I have never heard any of my colleagues say that they were in favour of forced conversion therapy. I have never heard any of my colleagues say that it was okay to force people to undergo conversion therapy, to take pills and use barbaric methods for therapy purposes. I have never heard that from any of my colleagues.

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My colleague should not put words in the mouth of my colleagues from the Conservative Party. What we want is to protect the conversations between specialists, between parents. Conversations have to happen.

Should we be forcing people to change who they are through barbaric methods, as we have heard in the various examples cited by the committee and as we have read in the newspapers? No, absolutely not.

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I totally agree with much of the speech from the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

However, it seems that the Conservatives here are trying to say that they are against this practice but they are falling back on a concern about whether conversations about conversion therapy would fall under the aspects of this bill. The member said that the Conservatives' amendments did not pass in committee, but an NDP amendment in committee did pass that gave that greater certainty.

The amendment specified that all good-faith attempts to affirm a person's decision about their sexual orientation, their gender identity or their gender expression would be exempt from this bill, so what more do they want? This amendment gets rid of all the concerns about conversations between family members and friends and, yet, the Conservatives just seem to want to double down on this concern and say "yes, but". I just wonder if the member could comment on that.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

It is simple. The government had the opportunity to do things properly. It had the opportunity to again obtain a greater consensus, not just in Parliament but among Canadians. I remind members that each of the 338 parliamentarians in the 43rd Parliament represents people from every riding, people from different social spheres, people at different places in terms of their faith, knowledge and awareness of LGBTQ communities.

As I mentioned, before I became an MP, I had little or no contact with LGBTQ communities and no knowledge of conversion therapy. However, when I read the bill's preamble on the justice department's website, which clearly explained what it was, what it was not and who was exempt from being criminalized, I was satisfied. Most of the people we represent across the country are also satisfied.

The government stubbornly insisted on not accepting a Conservative amendment because it was playing petty politics and wanted to make the Conservative Party look bad, when—

• (1640)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I am trying to give as much time as possible, but there are other questions.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I found it troubling to listen to the answer to the last question. By default, the Conservatives say the government did this and the government did that, and that this is why we cannot be where we are. The NDP member asked a bona fide question about this issue, and the member tried to deflect it to the government.

The Conservatives have to make a decision. They have to decide whether they are for banning conversion therapy, as they preach so much, or they are going to get hung up on the issue that only they perceive regarding the definition. By the way, the rest of us just look at it as a red herring.

The question for the member is quite clear. What is more important to him: banning conversion therapy or seeing that this definition gets tweaked in a way that absolutely maximizes what he suggests is the proper way, despite the fact that everybody else does not?

Mr. Luc Berthold: It is banning conversion therapy. That is it.

[Translation]

We must ban conversion therapy. I cannot not be any clearer than that.

Once again, the member for Kingston and the Islands is trying to redirect the debate and the responses, saying that we do not agree. I remind the member that his party is unfortunately the one in government. His party introduced this bill. His party made some progress and now refuses to make amendments because they come from the Conservatives. It refuses to accept the Conservative Party's sensible amendments. I want to make this clear once and for all. I am completely against conversion therapy. We must ban this practice. It is not a matter of debate; it is a matter of protecting others. That is what my hon. colleague needs to understand.

[English]

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his commitment to standing against coercive and abusive therapies on behalf of vulnerable Canadians. I wonder, however, what he thinks about the earlier assertion by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader that this bill includes a protection of parental rights to allow parents to follow a wait-and-see approach for their children who are struggling with their identity. That way, they will wait until they are mature enough to understand the repercussions of gender transition.

The bill clearly allows an affirmation-only approach. I wonder if the member would be able to speak to the apparent error in the parliamentary secretary's statement.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

The Liberals are sadly playing politics with this issue instead of trying to find a solution or a consensus, when, for once, a consensus is possible on an issue like this one. It would be easy to get a consensus on this issue, but unfortunately, as my colleague pointed out, the Liberals seem to have a hard time wording the bills properly to ensure that, when they rise in the House, what is written in the bill reflects what they are saying and can reassure most Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have had many constituents who are against the practice of conversion therapy reach out to me. However, I have many constituents who are concerned with the definition used in the bill. They are worried that it could have implications for parental rights, religious freedoms and even getting proper medical information if they are thinking about going through a gender transition.

What does the member think about those concerns?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, many people are concerned about the definition in the bill. The Conservatives proposed something very reasonable and acceptable that could have addressed many of these concerns. Unfortunately, the government chose not to accept these amendments, which, as I said, could have and should have gained a broad consensus on a topic as important as this, not only among members of Parliament, but among the people that each of us represents in our ridings.

• (1645)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. 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 Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Diversity and Inclusion; the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Small Business; the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, Justice.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to participate in such an important debate and discussion about a bill that would ban conversion therapy and make it a criminal practice.

Despite some of the objections that I have heard in the House today, I do not believe this bill would prevent conversations aimed at exploring a person's sexual identity, including with friends, family members, teachers, social workers, psychologists, religious leaders and so on.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am being heckled from across the way that I am wrong on that, but I genuinely believe that I am not.

The issue of conversion therapy came to light in my community of Kingston not that long ago. It was earlier this year or perhaps late in the fall when it became known that a worship centre in Kingston had been practising conversion therapy for many years. This came to light and was documented through a three-part Global News presentation so that people could really understand and grasp

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what was happening in our community. It even got some national attention, given the severity of what had taken place. It was a real eye-opener to a lot of people in my community to learn what was going on right inside of it, and many experienced shock as a result of hearing about conversion therapy.

One individual was primarily responsible for being the whistleblower, so to speak. His name is Ben Rodgers. He came forward after years of going through conversion therapy at the Third Day Worship Centre in Kingston, and he told his story. His desire to come forward was, quite frankly, out of his concern for the way that others may be treated and affected by attending the same worship centre that he did, so I would like to take this opportunity to read Ben's words of what he experienced during his time at the the Third Day Worship Centre in Kingston.

He writes:

My name is Ben Rodgers, and I am a Conversion Therapy Survivor!

When I was 19 years old, I was subjected to a form of change therapy through a church called Third Day Worship Centre in Kingston Ontario. This church wanted to correct me and make me a "good" "true 'straight' man" of god. I came out as Gay when I was 18, I was a Cadet, a Football Player, a Singer, Actor, Writer, Artist, Volunteer, I was on my youth worship team and very involved with my church and community. My Mom moved away, back to Kingston, not long after. My brother and his wife and now my Mother who was living in their basement granny suite were all attending this church and all very much against my being gay.

At 19, I was accepted to go to Musical Theatre School. That Summer, I moved in with my Mom...to make some cash and then go off to school. I experienced Kingston's Gay "Scene", which was a small bar called Shay Foo Foo's, and made new friends.

However, soon I started attending Third Day Worship Centre's Young Adults group. I fell for the entire thing! The rock band style worship team, the dance team, mission trips, evangelism, bible school! I fell for it all!

At first things didn't seem so bad at first. I felt very accepted and loved. It felt like they truly wanted to help me and...made me feel like they knew god's path for me and knew how to "fix" me. It was all too good to be true, I fell for it and I wanted to be a part of it. I wanted to sing and praise. I wanted to be part of the worship team. To be a part of the church, or any of its ministries, you had to become a member.

• (1650)

I was still struggling with being gay and a Christian. These new leaders, and my mom and family, they did not agree with my being gay. I didn't know what to do anymore. That is when I began attending mentoring sessions, and private counsel with my new church leaders. I was taught and made to understand that I was trapped by the "enemy" or "the devil" and his demons. I was made to write a Sin List; I was made to confess anything that may hold me from my walk with god.

I entrusted these leaders with the fact that when I was a boy, I was sexually molested by an older cousin. Due to that encounter, or so these religious leaders made me believe, I had let a man take advantage of me and let the enemy attach his demons of lust and homosexuality upon me. They made me feel and believe that it was my fault and that I was rendered with demons. That and a lack of a father figure is why I was acting out and why I was "choosing" to live this "gay lifestyle, which is a clear abomination onto god".

There was a prayer service of sorts that was performed over me to make me straight. My very own pray away the gay, or at least the demons, as they called them.

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I was directed to observe a 3-day dry fast, which is a fast where you have no foods and no liquids. This is actually rather dangerous and should never be done without medical guidance which I was not suggested to seek out. At the end of the fast, I was to attend the Sunday service after which I was to be sitting at the front row where the Pastor, Francis Armstrong, his wife, and the church counselor, were going to at the end of the service, pray over me.

After three days with no food or liquids, now I had their hands on my face, head and shoulders. It felt like these people were yelling and screaming in these tongues, “mystical languages” that they spoke, and pressing their hands down on me. Until the point where I either gave in and let it all happen or gave up and let them win. I remember, I went down to the floor and they continued, casting out the demons and praying for me to be “right”.

After all of this I was offered a space in their bible school, and learned as I went along that you either did as you were told or they wanted nothing to do with you. I was instructed to become celibate, to throw away and completely separate myself from anything, and anyone, that had to do with my old “gay life”. They also had very strict rules on how I was to act, and what I was and was not allowed to do. They controlled who and when and how I could be around others, and particularly how I was not allowed to be alone with other males.

This all went on for over a year, where I had to be this “straight” person and deny who I really was. Lying to myself and others. Losing pieces of myself. Losing my faith in the process.

After I was kicked out of the bible school, and kicked off of ministry duties, I was slowly pushed out of the church. Losing where I was renting, losing everyone I knew. It meant having to try and learn who I was after having to cut off so much of what and who I was and was trying to be.

I was made to feel worthless, unlovable, unworthy and lesser than others simply for being gay. I was taught to hate myself and taught to feel like who I am is unclean, and unnatural. All of these things were lies. Lies that I was taught to believe and endure. All lies that I have had to overcome and am still overcoming. I have had to go through many hells in my life to become strong enough to fight back and to reclaim who I am.

Now we must fight to help those that are still going through these tortures. Those that haven't found their voices or found the support and help they need.

Our Government needs to step up and protect people like me who were vulnerable and made choices because we were being geared and taught, or too afraid not to. Help stop these organizations and people who speak and do and cause these harms.

My story is just one of many. Our voices need to be heard!

● (1655)

Those are the words of Ben Rodgers, as I indicated at the beginning of my speech. It is my extreme honour to represent him as his member of Parliament and to read his words into the record as we debate the importance this legislation. Ben is a hero. He found his way to realize what had happened to him so he could tell his story, so he could blow the whistle to the media about what was going on at Third Day Worship Centre in Kingston, Ontario. As a result of that, the community became very aware of this and there was a huge outlash and backlash from the community as people demanded change.

We can argue over the nuances of the wording in the legislation. We can find reasons not to support it. I am very pleased and happy and I congratulate the previous Conservative member, when I asked him a question, for saying that the most important thing was banning conversion therapy. I hope that means he will vote in favour of this bill, as a number of Conservative colleagues did at second reading.

He also said that the government brought this bill in, that it was its fault, that it could have made it clearer and that it put the legislation forward in this form. The government also accepted the proposed changes at committee. The Liberal members sitting on the committee worked with the NDP and I presume the Bloc to bring forward some amendments and changes. The government certainly

respected the parliamentary process to allow the committee to do its work so it could report back to the House with a more improved bill, and that is what we have.

I genuinely hope my Conservative colleagues who voted for this bill at second reading, who have shown they are willing to take leadership on this issue and who are concerned about specific wording will recognize that we went through the parliamentary process. They obviously have a concern, a concern that is not shared by the majority. Now the bill is back in the House. At the end of the day, what is more important than trying to dissect the exact wording and what it implies is that this legislation get passed, so people like Ben do not continue to be subjected to the abuses, so people like Ben are not told in their place of worship that they are unclean. That is more important than getting hung up on a definition because someone happens to think it might mean something that it does not, which, by the way, the majority of members of the House clearly do not.

I really hope the Conservative members do not use that as a reason not to support this bill. I know there will be dissent among members in the House. There will be a few members, probably the one who heckled me earlier in my speech, and that is fine, but the more members who support this, the better. We will not get unanimous support of the House, which I think is fairly clear, but we certainly can show that members can come out in large numbers to represent almost unanimous consent that this is an important issue for people in our country. This is an important issue for a portion of our population that has struggled so much throughout the years, that has tried so much to get governments of the day to wake up and realize that there is no difference between people just because of the way we happen to be born and who we are.

I encourage all members of the House to vote in favour of the legislation, to get it through the House, as a previous member of the Bloc said, before this session of Parliament is over so we can put it into law, make this a criminal activity and ensure that voices like Ben Rodgers help protect people into the future.

● (1700)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague. Ben was lied to. Sexual orientation is not a disorder to be cured, and the creator does not make mistakes. His friend Ben is whole and perfect in the eyes of whatever deity he subscribes to. That needs to be put on the record in the House of Commons.

The story of Ben also speaks to the facts and some of the causes as to why the LGBTQ+ community experiences such high levels of youth homelessness. These beliefs that sexual orientation is something to be cured often forces youth from the community onto the streets.

I am wondering if the member can talk about why ending the practice of conversion therapy in the country is so important to ending the stigma and also, hopefully over time, eroding the type of stigma that forces youths from the community onto the streets and into poverty.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, most members here know that member and I can go toe to toe on some issues together from time to time, but we clearly see eye to eye on this one, and I am extremely grateful for that.

We need to ensure conversion therapy is banned, because it is part of the long process of healing and coming to terms with the way people were treated in the past and, in particular, people in the LGBTQ2 community.

We are making advancement. We are progressing. We are changing. I look at my own parents and they have come so far in their personal positions on gay marriage, for example.

Encouraging people to be proud of who they are will only further advance the progress we have already made and must continue to make so more young people are accepted for who they are and feel comfortable in their own skin. I genuinely believe that in itself will help tremendously with a lot of the homelessness she has identified.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kingston and the Islands for his speech.

We are hearing a lot of opinions in this very sensitive debate. What concerns me is that we are still having this discussion, even after all the progress made in recent decades.

I know that the hon. member represents a party that claims to be progressive. I think that we are also a party that sees itself as progressive and that every member of the House considers himself or herself progressive.

I would like to ask my colleague if he feels that today's debate and the fact that we have to discuss this topic are a bit disturbing, because in a normal world, this kind of conversion therapy should not even occur to anyone.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I too am very comfortable talking about this. Sometimes, though, perhaps we need to have uncomfortable conversations to push the needle even further. If this is uncomfortable to any degree for anybody, if I am understanding the question correctly, and if that helps push forward the agenda on this very important topic, then I am more than willing to participate in that.

With some of the rhetoric we heard today, I am concerned that we not lose sight of the greater good here. The greater good, no matter how we look at it, is protecting people in these vulnerable situations as opposed to nitpicking over a particular wording in legislation.

• (1705)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by acknowledging that I am asking this question while our country mourns the discovery of the 215 children found in a mass grave at the Kamloops residential school. We honour those lives and recognize the genocide committed by Canada.

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On a day where we ought to be talking about the importance of moving past our histories of hate, whether it is toward indigenous people or transpeople, I am frankly disturbed by the level of transphobia I have heard from Conservative MPs in the House of Commons, some of it overt, some of it covert.

What we heard clearly in testimony and what those of us who know and love transpeople know is that conversion therapy is dangerous, even deadly. We are talking about banning a practice that hurts people. Could the member speak to the life-saving importance of banning conversion therapy?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I have no doubt about the fact that it is absolutely critical toward saving lives. During my speech, I read into the record the story of Ben Rodgers. Ben summed it up by saying that he was doing this now, coming forward to tell his story, so we could help put an end to this.

Ensuring conversion therapy is banned might only be one step, but it is certainly a very important step forward in ensuring many lives are not negatively affected by this horrible practice.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member putting the words of Ben into the record. I also want to thank Ben for his courage in sharing his story so hopefully we do not see more victims of conversion therapy.

I would like the member's comments and thoughts on the second reading vote on the legislation. We saw so many members, for the first time, providing qualifications as to why they were supporting it this time, almost setting the stage as to why they would be voting against it at third reading. Hopefully they will not. I appreciate the member's thoughts on that.

I would also like the member's thoughts on us, as representatives. Do we represent the voices of the majority or as decision-makers here, do we bring about laws that will allow more Canadians to be their true, authentic selves?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would share in some of the concern as to what I have heard today. At the second reading on this, we saw all but seven or eight Conservatives vote in favour of sending this to committee. Now that the bill has come back, the tables seemed to have turned quite a bit. It seems as though people are trying to establish the groundwork to justify why they cannot vote for it at third reading.

Those members have to make a decision. What is more important? Trying to fine-tune wording because they think it might do something that very few people agree with or protecting people like Ben? I would submit that ensuring we protect people like Ben is of utmost importance when it comes to voting on this, not getting hung up on some words in legislation.

On her other comments, we are put here to ensure people are represented and quite often that happens to be a minority, but that is, quite frankly, our job.

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Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to make a comment about the individual of whom the member spoke. I could not agree more that this individual faced conversion therapy and it was entirely wrong. My heart goes out to him. I certainly hope and pray he is doing much better after having gone through that.

The member also used words like “nitpicking” and “hung up” on having concerns with this legislation. My concerns reflect someone who was part of the study, someone who told committee members that in light of her desire to have help in counselling, she was invisible to them. Bill C-6 is too expansive based on the fact that it now bans two kinds of counselling; sexual orientation change counselling and reduction of sexual behaviour counselling independent—

• (1710)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will let the hon. member answer.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, this issue has gone through the parliamentary process. I respect the member's objection. However, it went through the parliamentary process. It went to committee. It was studied at committee. It went through the due process that it was entitled to. It is now back before the House.

The question is, do we vote in favour of legislation to support people like Ben or do we vote against it because we are concerned with one particular element that has not been proven to be the case in terms of the definition?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will begin my contribution to this sober discussion of Bill C-6 and the need to protect Canadians from conversion therapy with experiences in my own life where individuals have been harmed by being directed unknowingly or forced into inappropriate treatments against their will.

My first experience was in the medical field, when I was employed at Souris Valley Mental Health Hospital. From its beginnings in 1921, it was considered on the cutting edge of experimental treatments for people with mental illness. The facility had a reputation of leading the way in therapeutic programming. Early techniques included insulin shock therapy, hydrotherapy, electroshock and lobotomy.

A lobotomy is a form of psychosurgery, a neurosurgical treatment of a mental disorder that involves severing most connections in the brain's prefrontal cortex. It was used for mental disorders, usually defined by a combination of how a person behaves, feels, perceives, and thinks, and occasionally other conditions as a mainstream procedure in some western countries for more than two decades, despite general recognition of frequent and serious side effects. While some people experienced symptomatic improvement with the operation, the improvements were achieved at the cost of creating other impairments. The procedure was controversial from its initial use, in part due to the balance between benefits and risks.

One of the patients in my care was Annie, one of the few remaining lobotomy patients at that time in Canada. Today, lobotomy has become a disparaged procedure, a byword for medical barbarism

and an exemplary instance of the medical trampling of patients' rights.

What is remarkable to me is that the originator of the procedure shared the 1949 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for the “discovery of the therapeutic value of lobotomy in certain psychoses”. Clearly, what we know now would have made this award reprehensible.

Another personal experience with a method of conversion therapy was 30 years ago, when a family dear to me was navigating a behavioural problem. At a young age, a child was suffering anger and rebellion issues, and the treatment recommended to the parents was participation in a wilderness camp experience that taught discipline and built peer relationships. The parents' grief was overwhelming, learning their young teen was coerced into submission with no compassionate support or counselling and had attempted suicide. Upon extraction from that place and hospitalization near home, they later learned that at an innocent age their child had been traumatized by sexual abuse.

In both of these scenarios, what was considered to be cutting-edge, state-of-the-art or appropriate treatment at the time was clearly abusive and wrong.

Today, in this bill and in the scientific and medical realms, conversion therapy is defined and only applied to the LGBTQ2 community. I support a conversion therapy ban, but not this conversion therapy ban, because this bans more than just conversion therapy. Bill C-6 clearly violates the fundamental Charter of Rights and Freedoms for LGBTQ2 and other Canadians.

The definition of conversion therapy conflates orientation with behaviour. The Bill C-6 definition states:

...conversion therapy means a practice, treatment or service designed to change a person's sexual orientation to heterosexual, to change a person's gender identity or gender expression to cisgender or to repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviour or non-cisgender gender expression. For greater certainty, this definition does not include a practice, treatment or service that relates to the exploration and development of an integrated personal identity without favouring any particular sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

The definition actually defines conversion therapy to include providing counselling for someone to reduce their unwanted sexual behaviour. This means that if counselling is about reducing porn use or sexual addiction but is not seeking to change someone's orientation, it would still be a criminal act if it is non-heterosexual behaviour.

There are legitimate reasons why people of any orientation may want to reduce their behaviour. This definition, though, would allow only straight Canadians to get that support but not LGBTQ2 Canadians. This would directly violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms' equality provisions. It would criminalize any conversation including conversations initiated by LGBTQ2 individuals seeking answers to sexuality questions they wish to explore with family members, friends or faith leaders.

• (1715)

No medical body or professional counselling body in North America uses this definition created by the government for Bill C-6. The Canadian Psychological Association actually defines a psychologist as someone who helps clients change their behaviour, stating, "A psychologist studies how we think, feel and behave from a scientific viewpoint and applies this knowledge to help people understand, explain and change their behaviour."

In addition to no medical or professional counselling body in North America using this definition, the bill's definition contradicts itself. The government says that LGBTQ2 Canadians can still explore their sexuality, but exploration cannot happen if they cannot also choose to reduce behaviours that every other Canadian could get help with.

There are many reasons why someone would want to reduce unwanted behaviour without changing their orientation, but the bill would prevent any directional support that would reduce non-heterosexual behaviours. No one suspects that straight persons seeking to reduce sexual behaviour such as pornography use or sex addiction are attempting to change their sexual orientation. LGBTQ2 persons seeking the same kind of professional help could also just be wanting to reduce that behaviour without changing their orientation. Under this bill, however, they would not be able to get help because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. An exploration clause would not protect this treatment.

The language applies to conversations between and with parents, with trusted friends, discussions between individuals and faith leaders, as well as sensitive interactions with guidance counsellors. It also contains no exceptions for the right to conversations between parents and their children. Counsel from these individuals, people who are appropriately looked to for wisdom and support, would effectively be criminalized to the same degree as the damaging and unacceptable practices that all members of the House seek to prohibit. Currently, any course of counselling whereby individuals are seeking to reduce their sexual activities could be considered conversion therapy and therefore subject to legal intervention. This could be corrected.

In Bill C-6, the exploration clause itself directs patients' counselling outcomes. Even professional counsellors seek not to do that for their patients, so why is the government directing outcomes with this bill? Professional counsellors are like a GPS: They only give directions, but the client decides the destination.

The government's definition of conversion therapy is not used by governments around the world. No conversion therapy ban in the world bans counselling for unwanted non-heterosexual behaviour. I have reviewed and would be pleased to provide a research document listing 152 definitions of conversion therapy used around the

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world, including by all the governments that have passed a law or bylaw that are listed on Wikipedia, the United Nations, the United Church of Canada and LGBTQ2 activists like Kris Wells. None of them include sexual behaviour counselling independent of orientation change.

Bill C-6 is much too expansive, based on the fact that Canada's ban actually bans two kinds of counselling: sexual orientation change counselling and reduction of sexual behaviour counselling independent of orientation change. This is why the ban is so dangerous. No medical body or government in the world defines conversion therapy that way.

The UN definition, as follows, would better reflect what the definition of conversion therapy should be in Bill C-6:

"Conversion therapy" is an umbrella term used to describe interventions of a wide-ranging nature, all of which have in common the belief that a person's sexual orientation or gender identity can and should be changed. Such practices aim (or claim to aim) at changing people from gay, lesbian or bisexual to heterosexual and from trans or gender diverse to cisgender.

That is a good definition that this bill should reflect.

As a direct consequence of the flawed definition of conversion therapy, this bill would restrict freedom of choice and expression for LGBTQ2 Canadians. While the bill would allow for measures to change a child's gender, including surgery and counselling, there is no such liberty afforded for those who wish to transition back to their birth gender. It would restrict intimate conversations intended to limit sexual behaviour, as well as individuals' attempts to detransition.

This all-encompassing bill would not only criminalize people who listen or speak to those transitioning or having transitioned, but also those who have gone through the process of transitioning, have detransitioned, and are now sharing their stories with others. A simple search of the Internet will expose members to a wide range of thought, opinion, and the personal stories of those who have struggled with gender dysphoria. Not only would these individuals be criminalized by Bill C-6, but they would also be silenced by the implementation of Bill C-10, because of their communications on social media.

• (1720)

Many of those stories include decisions taken at a young age to begin the use of hormone treatment or to surgically alter one's body. For many, these decisions did not satiate feelings of gender dysphoria and, in many cases, worsened feelings of self-image and self-identity.

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I will share a handful of these testimonies to have on record today.

In the case of one YouTuber, she, Elle Palmer, started taking testosterone at the age of 16. She had struggled for years with issues of self-hatred and, in her words, began the process of transitioning not in order to look more masculine but in order to hide elements of her body. In her opinion, transitioning was the ultimate form of self-harm. She wanted to change everything about herself and did not see a future in which she could be happy in her own body. At the time, she did not realize that it was possible not to hate her own body.

In another piece of personal testimony, Max explicitly states that gender transition was not the solution to her severe depression. In her words, she feels that she needed a transition in her life, but not from female to male.

Cari's advice to others is that, from her own experience and from her conversations with other detransitioned and reidentified women, "transition is not the only way, or even necessarily the best way, to treat gender dysphoria". She speaks to her own experience, where she was prescribed hormones after four sessions of therapy. She notes that no attempts were made at these therapy sessions to process personal issues that she raised. She notes that no one in the medical or psychological field ever tried to dissuade her from her gender transition or to offer other options, other than to perhaps wait until age 18. She says, "I detransitioned because I knew I could not continue running from myself...because acknowledging my reality as a woman is vital to my mental health."

Lee spoke to her experience: "There were all these red flags and I honestly wish that somebody had pointed them out to me and then I might not have transitioned in the first place. If I had realized that somebody with a history of an eating disorder, a history of childhood sexual abuse, a history of neglect and bullying for being a gender non-conforming female, a person with internalized homophobia and misogyny should not have been encouraged to transition.... I wish that somebody had sort of tried to stop me...transition...did not work for me."

There is another story, which I transcribed from a post on YouTube from July 2019, which has now been made private, so I am going to respect the author's anonymity while sharing her thoughts. She said the following, and I am quoting her.

"I was transgender since I was 15. I'm 21 now.

"I don't want to be a life-long medical patient. I don't want to be psychologically dependent on hormones that are made in a lab and injected into me.

"What I want, and what I've always wanted, is peace with myself. Not surgically altered self, but my own self. I want to feel an organic love for my body. This body that I was born into, that I was lucky to be born into and inhabit.

"I wanted to find ways of dealing with my gender issues that aren't medically transitioning, and those ways were not presented to me. Now is my time to make peace with femaleness. With womanhood.

"Even though I'm not good at being a woman, in the sense that I get gender dysphoria, a woman is still what I am. A dysfunctional, wonky, weird, gay, autistic, and completely authentic woman.

"I think I was possessed by some-thing. By an ideology. I can't understate the role social media has played in all this.

"It's glaringly obvious to me now that which part of the internet you inhabit for large chunks of time has serious effects on your brain, and your view of the world.

"When it feels right, I'll tell my parents. And I know they'll be happy to hear it, because the concerns they had about my 16-year-old self are the ones that I'm just starting to understand as a 21-year-old. I suppose wisdom really does come with age, doesn't it.

"But, um, yeah, you try telling that to an isolated, self-loathing, gender non-conforming 16-year-old who wants to transition. I mean, you're going to run into some issues.

"It's just gender dysphoria that I deal with in my own way now, and I don't want to go through all the things that I was kind of being, I guess, pressured by these online spaces to go and do.

"I know there are lots of people who are just like me, really, who are going through this same thing, and I have a funny feeling that there will be lots—lots more of us in the next few years as more people who are sort of teenagers, and non-binary and trans at the moment get into their early 20s.

"So, if I can make this resource that maybe people can relate to, because we are, we are, people like us, sort of um, masculine girls and butch lesbians, who were born between sort of the years 1995 and 2000 that have really been the guinea pigs for this.

"For this, whatever this is, going on in the trans community at the moment. We've been the guinea pigs and I'm at the other side now, and I really hope that some more people who are struggling with this can get out to the other side. Cuz it's nice."

● (1725)

These are not my fabrications. They are the personal, emotional testimonies of those who found that gender transition was not a permanent solution to their gender dysphoria and who found worth in their own process of detransition. These individuals have made their stories of detransitioning, or deciding not to surgically or hormonally transition, public and they stress that they are in no way being disrespectful toward the personal choices of others. This is important. They have friends and, as it stands, Bill C-6 would criminalize people like them. We cannot restrict the free, respectful and exploratory speech of those with valuable lived experience. The overreach of this legislation will harm those who seek to detransition as well as those who, of their own free will, seek support and counselling to change behaviour as LGBTQ2 individuals.

This ban censors conversations. It is not the definition of conversion therapy in Bill C-6 that would censor conversations about sexuality and gender, but the clause on advertising. At the justice committee, the government added the word “promotion” of conversion therapy as a criminal act. This means that free advertising, including verbal advertising, would be banned as criminal as well.

The original wording of the advertising ban states, “Everyone who knowingly advertises an offer to provide conversion therapy is”, and the updated clause states, “Everyone who knowingly promotes or advertises an offer to”. Because the bill defines conversion therapy as merely getting support to reduce behaviour, verbal promotion of a religious event that encourages people to remain celibate, a column that supports detransitioning or any kind of verbal advertising for a counselling session to reduce non-heterosexual behaviour would be made criminal.

Free to Question is an alliance of detransitioners, medical experts, parents, LGBTQ2 people and feminists who want to protect the right of health care professionals to offer ethical and agenda-free psychotherapy services and assessments to gender-dysphoric youth. I think it would be helpful to repeat the list of those participating in this alliance: detransitioners, medical experts, parents, LGBTQ2 people and feminists. They call for an addition to the bill to ensure health care professionals are able to support youth effectively. They wanted this in the bill:

For greater certainty, this definition does not apply to any advice or therapy provided by a social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, therapist, medical practitioner, nurse practitioner or other health care professional as to the timing or appropriateness of social or medical transition to another gender, including discussion of the risks and benefits and offering alternative or additional diagnoses or courses of treatment.

Every one of us in the House has a responsibility to balance individual rights and freedoms within a diverse society. While the charter protects a pluralistic society, this bill creates a zero-sum game of winners and losers and puts pluralism at risk because the definition of conversion therapy being used causes more harm than good.

Bill C-6, like so many other bills and regulations the Liberal government has brought forward, intentionally seeks to control outcomes based on ideological indoctrination. It goes far beyond the agreed need to ban conversion therapy to controlling thought, speech and behaviour, and stifling democratic freedoms through overreaching legislation.

I support a conversion therapy ban, but not this conversion therapy ban, because this bans more than just conversion therapy. Therefore, I cannot support Bill C-6. Let us do better.

• (1730)

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have two questions for my colleague

First, I heard her make a connection between mental health and the problems that someone who is homosexual can experience. I would like her to clarify. Does she think there is a connection between homosexuality and having a mental health issue?

Second, she mentioned all of the legislation on conversion therapy, so I wanted to ask her whether she has read Bill 70. This bill

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was introduced in the Quebec National Assembly to amend the Quebec Professional Code to prohibit professionals from providing conversion therapy.

I would like to know whether she has read that bill. If so, what does she think about it?

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, I have to say that, as I introduced my speech today and talked about my experiences in a particular hospital with lobotomy, I thought that might come up. The truth of the matter is absolutely not. The point I was making is that human beings do things to each other, and we sometimes think we are doing what is best in the moment and we find out after the fact. I mean, none of us would give a prize to that particular individual for what was done there. I worked with Annie, and I can certainly speak to that first-hand, so that is not what I was saying. As far as Bill 70, it would modify legislation so that health practitioners and whatnot cannot provide conversion therapy, and I agree with that wholeheartedly.

As I said in my speech in relation to what the individuals of that group wanted in the bill, they are not talking about conversion therapy. They are talking about the opportunity to have more than one perspective presented, and we know that there are many options. Just from what these individuals who have detransitioned have shared, it is clear they felt that they were not being given the best opportunity for care, and this—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to go to other questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for sharing the testimonies people have shared with her. I know that she has been listening throughout the debate today and, prior to this, to the work at committee where she heard several other testimonies. I would ask the member this: Is it important that their voices also be heard?

I have an additional question to the member, as she closed by sharing how she would be voting. Because she and numerous members have determined and shared how they would be voting, why are we not calling this legislation to a vote? We could ensure that we either allow the bill to continue in the democratic process or, if there is enough opposition to it, we would not see the bill proceed.

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Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, my concern is very deep. Believe me, I have those relationships too. An individual was discussed who faced this terrible conversion therapy experience. Conversion therapy needs to end. I do not disagree with that.

However, it is disturbing to me that the Liberal government adds things in. When I voted to send the bill to committee, I expected better, not worse. What was done there actually included changes to behaviour. This applies to LGBTQ2 individuals who want to make changes to their behaviour that have nothing to do with their orientation, so this legislation is flawed.

Let us do better. Let us focus on conversion therapy, and then the bill would have unanimous support.

• (1735)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sitting here in the debate for a number of days now, and having to listen to the level of transphobia coming from the Conservatives, has been really disturbing. I would like to point out that the member tells stories that certainly fit her values, but she does not seem to acknowledge the many other stories that have been told.

I wonder why the member continues to oppose something that is a human right. Certainly, what she is speaking about in terms of acknowledging all the research that has been done on the matter totally contradicts everything that she has shared today.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question, but I do not appreciate being called a transphobe. She does not know anything about me. She does not know the relationships I have, so that is inappropriate. It is time for us to stop this name-calling.

Second, human rights are very important to me. Believe me. They are the premise of my private member's bill. That being said, there are people here whose human rights are being trampled on, because the bill goes too far. Someone who wants a change in their behaviour cannot do it legally as an LGBTQ2 person, because this bill is proposing controlling behaviours as well as conversion therapy, such as the behaviour of individuals who want to have certain types of care. This bill would impact the human rights of those people.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her speech. It was one of the more informative speeches we have heard here today. She really tackled the issues in the bill: key terms and concepts, unlike what we have seen from a lot of the Liberals.

When the Liberals get up to talk about this they talk about banning conversion therapy, and everybody is in favour of banning conversion therapy. It all comes down to what one defines as conversion therapy. It has been our intention the entire time to ensure that the definition is right.

I want to commend my hon. colleague for her speech today. Could the member comment a little more about the inclusion of the term "behaviour" in this bill?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, it is so important to me that we deal with facts and not name-calling.

In a recent Nanos poll, 91% of Canadians supported the right of Canadians to get the counselling of their choice, regardless of sexual orientation. I think that says it all, right there. The majority of Canadians want all Canadians to get the counselling of their choice, regardless of sexual orientation.

What this bill does now, since going to committee and coming back, is it removes that opportunity: that right to get counselling in regard to sexual behaviour. That should not be impacted by sexual orientation. Even the Minister of Justice admitted that Bill C-6 prevents consenting adults from getting the counselling they want. In introducing the bill, he said that the government:

[recognizes] that criminalizing profiting from conversion therapy means that consenting adults would be prevented from accessing conversion therapy unless it is available free of charge.

Since when does the government have the authority to tell individual people what they want to do? I think that applies especially here in regard to seeking help with behavioural issues that any Canadian wants help with, and 91% of us think—

The Deputy Speaker: We have time for one more question.

The hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I have probably never heard a more misleading speech on a piece of legislation in the House.

I wonder why the member continually, deliberately misreads the legislation. For instance, when she says that individuals cannot talk about promoting conversion therapy, the legislation says quite specifically that what is prohibited is promotion of an offer to provide conversion therapy. It says nothing about individual conversations. When the member says that it provides only one kind of counselling, the bill does exactly the opposite. The bill says very specifically that counselling should be offered without prejudging a sexual orientation or gender identity.

Why does the member persist in misleading the public about what is actually in this legislation?

• (1740)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, I believe that at committee, it was the member who responded to the individual who wanted to live a life other than a gay life. It was a choice. They had succeeded and chosen to do that. It was a choice. They did it with the help of counselling that this bill would make illegal.

She said to him, "You are making me invisible." You assured her that you would not do that, but what came out of that committee has actually made her even more invisible than she was to you before.

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The Deputy Speaker: Just before we go to resuming debate, I have a general thought with respect to members referring to others in the second person, using the words “you” and “your”. It does creep into debate from time to time. It is not an egregious offence, but it is something that needs caution and I remind members to direct their comments to the Chair.

[Translation]

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

I rise today to participate in the debate at third reading of Bill C-6, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding conversion therapy.

What is conversion therapy? Conversion therapy is a practice, service or treatment that is essentially designed to change a person's sexual orientation. I want to stress here that the goal is to “change”, since we are talking about conversion, which involves change. In my research, I learned that around 47,000 people in Canada have been subjected to this type of “therapy”—which I am putting in air quotes—and it is never successful.

I think I have mentioned that I am a social worker and very proud to be an active member of my professional association. I want to point out that Quebec has already had this debate, and that it has been taking real action against conversion therapy since Bill 70 was unanimously adopted in the Quebec National Assembly on December 9, 2020. Ontario and Manitoba have also passed similar legislation.

Passing Bill 70 was one more milestone confirming Quebec's place as a leader in Canada—and the world—in the fight against discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation. Quebec is a great nation that is respectful and open and celebrates sexual diversity. That is something that makes me very proud.

Driven by this deep conviction, this long tradition of respect and the unanimity on the principle at the National Assembly, the Bloc Québécois is obviously in favour of Bill C-6.

It should be noted that the bill the Liberal government introduced chooses not to fully ban conversion therapy, limiting the prohibition to minors and banning advertising and marketing as well as sending a Canadian minor abroad to get this type of pseudo-therapy. In other words, Bill C-6 seeks to ban imposing conversion therapy on children and adolescents. I am particularly sensitive to the whole issue of adolescence because it is a time when a person gets to know their body, a time of self-discovery.

I must say that I am a bit shocked that this topic is still being debated in the House today, but I am pleased to see that the majority of parliamentarians here support the idea of banning this type of therapy, except for a very active and vocal fringe of the Conservative Party, as we have seen today.

The bill seems balanced. To me it covers the bare minimum. Frankly, I am surprised to have to make this speech, since this

seems to fall under the category of respecting people's freedom to love whoever they want. Indeed, this is a question of love that we are talking about today. I want to make a point of saying that my wish is that every child and adolescent in Quebec and Canada can feel respected, welcomed, understood, included and loved regardless of their sexual orientation.

I also want to tell them that I have a great deal of empathy for those who are led to believe that they must choose between their sexual orientation and their spirituality, between their sexual orientation and their life in the community, between their sexual orientation and their future prospects, or in some cases between their sexual orientation and their family ties. These kinds of choices have no place in an open, sensible and sensitive society.

● (1745)

In fact, these dilemmas imposed on some young people are, in my opinion, absurd, since sexual orientation is not a matter of choice. It is therefore absurd to think that sexual orientation will determine anyone's place in society. It is also ridiculous to believe that conversion therapy could do anything other than suppress the full and honest expression of their sexual orientation. Conversion therapy cannot cure a disease that, basically, is not a disease or even a flaw.

Let us be clear: the practice of conversion therapy undermines respect for everyone's gender identity and sexual orientation. Conversion therapies are a direct affront to human dignity.

The Bloc Québécois recognizes that the groups promoting these practices are tiny and in a minority, and wishes to broadly state that respect for beliefs must go hand in hand with respect for differences and, at the same time, the assurance of equality among all persons.

However, conversion therapy advocates usually present these so-called therapies as a caring process and well-thought-out therapeutic sessions developed to help people come to their senses and get back on track. They present their sessions as open discussions about sexual orientation.

How can a discussion be open and balanced when the very purpose of that discussion is conversion? How can we believe that this is an open discussion when people are paying, and sometimes paying quite a lot, for a service that seeks to change a person's sexual preferences? How can we believe that these discussions can be beneficial when minors are being forced to participate in them under duress? In my opinion, the answer is obvious.

There is a very significant difference between caring and conversion therapy. Caring comes through acceptance, and when there is acceptance then people can talk about the fact that it is normal for a person to question their sexual orientation, try different things and learn about their sexuality and about the fact that a person's sexual orientation can change over the course of their lifetime.

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If we are truly accepting and open-minded, we can recognize that it is completely normal to be gay or to identify somewhere on the broad spectrum of sexual orientation. If we are completely open-minded and accepting, we understand that a person can, at different times in their life, experience something other than heterosexuality, and that is normal. If we are completely open-minded, we understand that being gay, lesbian, bisexual or any sexual orientation is equivalent to being heterosexual. In other words, sexual orientation should not have an impact on the life or the value that a person has.

Not being able to tolerate the idea that an individual can love the person they choose to love is not being open-minded. Those who seek to guide an individual to what is considered tolerable, to suppress sincere feelings and to violate a person's right to live their sexual orientation with dignity, are forced to use arguments based on fear. This places people in a position of making judgments.

I want members to clearly hear me. The Bloc Québécois will definitely be voting unanimously for Bill C-6. All our members, and I did say all, will vote in favour of this bill, as we did at second reading.

I call on all political parties to do the same and to fully, unequivocally and unanimously support Bill C-6 to send a clear message that, in Quebec and in Canada, we respect the dignity of all people who, ultimately, are just living with love.

• (1750)

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do want to remind the House that members of the Bloc, at committee, raised significant concerns about the text of this legislation. In fact, the Bloc representative on the committee voted against the addition of references to gender expression to the definition. It is important for the Bloc to remember that it was its own representative on the committee who did say that we needed to get the wording, the definition, right, because there are problems with the definition, and amendments were passed that he, in fact, voted against.

The other thing I wanted to say is that we hear from members, like the member for Kingston and the Islands, that we have to choose between banning conversion therapy and worrying about the details. I would simply say let us do both. Let us fix the problems with the definition and let us pass this bill. We have had the opportunity to do that. We still have the opportunity to do that.

I am struck to hear some members dismiss the study of the details as if they do not matter. If we get the details wrong, then we ban things that are not related to conversion therapy. Let us do both. Let us get the details right and let us pass this conversion therapy bill.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I know that he is passionate about this issue. We heard him speak at length in the House and at committee.

I would just like to remind him that, from a medical perspective, conversion therapy is pseudoscience. Not only is it dangerous and

degrading for the patient, but many studies have also proven that it does not work.

We heard from many witnesses about the impact of this type of therapy on people. Witnesses told us that their lives were turned upside down and that they even thought about suicide because they felt rejected by their community due to their sexual orientation, which in fact demonstrates that conversion therapy does not work.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that I really appreciated the member's speech, just as I appreciate her support and that of all Bloc Québécois MPs.

Does my colleague think we need to keep debating this bill, or does she think it is time to pass it so it can be brought into force and enable more Canadians to be themselves?

I believe Canada is an inclusive country. We know we still have a lot of work to do.

Is it time to vote on this motion, or do we need to keep debating this bill?

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her question.

I think my comment will serve as an answer to her question. Since 1977, Quebec's Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms has recognized sexual orientation as prohibited grounds for discrimination. In 2002, Quebec's National Assembly made the civil union of two people of the same sex legal.

In answer to her question, yes, it is time we passed this bill so we can protect children and teens who are currently being subjected to conversion therapy.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a party that has been groundbreaking in this country in forging respect for rights on gender and sexuality going back decades. I am always concerned when I hear a debate on rights and protection qualified by the word "but", and that is what I am hearing here. I am hearing everybody say they are in favour of banning conversion therapy, "but". The "but" seems to be they are concerned that, by banning this harmful conversion therapy, we might interfere with some forms of conversion attempts that may be caught by this.

The problem is that, underlying every concern expressed, mainly by Conservatives, there is something wrong with the person, so they want to preserve some ability to convert someone for something. That is where the problem is. There is nothing wrong with individuals who are non-heterosexual or non-binary gendered individuals.

My question is this. I am hearing a lot from the Conservatives, and the Liberals for that matter, that they are concerned about people being able to access counselling. If so, does my colleague agree with the NDP that we should amend the Canada Health Act so necessary mental health services are—

• (1755)

The Deputy Speaker: Time is up. We have time for a quick response.

The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I do not agree with his last question because we all know that all mental health care, health care and social services fall under provincial jurisdiction, and so under Quebec's jurisdiction, and that Quebec already provides quality services to support everyone who needs help.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to debate this bill about a social issue. However, in 2021, we should not have to rise in the House under such circumstances because conversion therapy obviously no longer has a place in our society.

The Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-6. Why? The reason is that the Bloc Québécois is deeply committed to protecting and promoting the rights and freedoms of Quebeckers and has always been quick to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation. Equality between Quebeckers is a fundamental value and an inalienable right in Quebec.

Practices that deny the existence of a person's core identity must be condemned. Historically, Quebec has been a leader in human rights protection. The Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms has recognized sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination since 1977, and same-sex marriage was legalized by the National Assembly of Quebec in 2002, when it instituted civil unions.

From a moral perspective, within a democratic society, it is legitimate to affirm fundamental community values. In Quebec, respect for the gender identity and sexual orientation of all people is a value that the practice of conversion therapy undermines.

From a medical perspective, conversion therapy is pseudoscience. Not only is it dangerous and degrading for the patient, but many studies have also proven that it does not work.

The Bloc Québécois recognizes that the groups promoting these practices are tiny and in a minority. Moreover, the Bloc wishes to state that respect for beliefs must go hand in hand with respect for differences and the assurance of equality among people. I would add that the Quebec and Canadian societies are distinct societies, but they have much in common, particularly in terms of values.

Also, it is fitting that, on a number of subjects, they agree and adopt concordant policies that move toward the advancement of rights. The Bloc Québécois acknowledges the Quebec government's initiative to protect human rights and welcomes Quebec justice minister Simon Jolin-Barrette's Bill 70. The bill aims to put an end to conversion therapy.

The Bloc Québécois is also pleased that the Canadian government recognizes by means of this bill that, as a democracy, it is appropriate to affirm shared values and pass laws that govern practices arising from beliefs that are in conflict with those values.

Government Orders

For all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois feels that the Criminal Code amendments in Bill C-6 are appropriate.

What is conversion therapy? Here is the definition from a Radio-Canada article:

Conversion therapy, or sexual reorientation therapy, is psychological or spiritual intervention meant to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity with the use of psychotherapy, drugs or a combination of the two.

In Canada, 47,000 men belonging to a sexual minority have been subjected to conversion therapy. According to the World Health Organization, these practices are a serious threat to the health and well-being of affected people.

The Canadian Psychological Association says that conversion or reparative therapy can result in negative outcomes, such as distress, anxiety, depression, negative self-image, a feeling of personal failure, difficulty sustaining relationships, and sexual dysfunction.

In 2009, the American Psychological Association released a study entitled "Resolution on Sexual Orientation Change Efforts". According to the study, contrary to claims made by those who administer these treatments, they are ineffective and potentially harmful. The study also noted that attraction to individuals of the same sex is a normal variation of human sexual behaviour and that those who promote conversion therapy tend to have very conservative religious opinions. That might be the crux of the problem.

I would like to talk about an interesting point my colleague from Shefford raised. The government finally chose to not only prohibit conversion therapy but to criminalize it. According to people with first-hand experience, some of these therapies were more like torture than therapy.

• (1800)

I think we can all agree that this practice, which is promoted and supported primarily by religious groups, is based on the idea that homosexuality is unnatural and wrong, that it is one of the most serious sins and that it could lead a person straight to hell.

Unfortunately, homophobia still exists in 2021. Expressions of it can be seen practically every day. It is frankly unacceptable that religious groups continue to stigmatize homosexuality. People in this community should not have to live in fear any longer. Human beings should not be subjected to goodness knows what kind of therapeutic process to become someone they simply are not. Many of us know people in our circles who have admitted how hard it still is to come out of the closet and affirm their identity. This bill does not solve all the problems of the LGBTQ2S+ community, but it is clearly an important step in advancing the debate.

Government Orders

Today is May 31, and we only have 17 sitting days remaining before the break. As we know, Bill C-19, which will change how an election is held during a pandemic, was passed under a gag order. Parliament needs to act quickly. I think there is a good chance that an election will be called, and any bills left on the Order Paper would therefore die. As I said, we only have 17 days left to move forward with this bill and all the others.

I am thinking of my colleague from Drummond who has been working very hard to ensure that Bill C-10 is given priority in the House and that it passes quickly. There is also the Émilie Sansfaçon bill to increase EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 50 weeks. In the context of a serious illness, such as cancer, we must be able to do something. Now, the question is not whether we are for or against conversion therapy. I think we can agree that it has no place today.

The important thing now is to act urgently on this issue. We have a responsibility as parliamentarians to do so. We have no control over the timeline, since that is up to the government. If it were up to me, a government would have to complete all four years of its mandate and get through all of the debates that arise, so that bills can be carefully studied.

Bill C-6 on conversion therapy reminds us that we must act urgently. I urge all members of Parliament to reflect and remember that we still need to vote and the bill has to be sent to the Senate. We urgently need to move forward.

Also, we need to reflect on the importance of secularism, which is highly valued in Quebec. There are some ultra-conservative religious groups that are having a significant impact on people's lives. We have a moral responsibility to protect these individuals, given the rejection they often feel and the trauma that conversion therapy can cause. The purpose of this government bill is to provide protections.

• (1805)

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been constituents in my riding who have contacted me with concerns about the bill similar to some that have been mentioned by others in the House. I have typically responded to them to say that, if I thought this bill would control speech between parents and children, or teachers and students, I would certainly not support the bill.

Has the member also had criticisms from within his own riding? Could he share what he might say to ensure that people are not unduly concerned about some of the things this bill does or does not do?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I will be honest with my colleague from Calgary Rocky Ridge: As the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, I have not been contacted about this issue, because these matters have simply been dealt with in Quebec. This is not an issue of relevance to us.

However, it is worth being responsible in stating our position, so I would like to share with my colleague one of the answers I could

have given. It is from the Conservative leader, who tweeted: “Let me be clear, conversion therapy has no place in Canada and should be banned”. To this he added, “Period. LGBTQ people have their place in the big Conservative family”.

I will not respond to that, but we get the gist of it. He continued, “...and I am committed to fighting this unacceptable and offensive practice. I will not compromise on that”.

That is probably the position I would take if one of my constituents contacted me about this issue.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to the last Bloc colleague, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan suggested there are concerns, so we should address these concerns and get the best of both worlds, but we have already done that. We went through the parliamentary process. It went to committee, and the committee decided that the concerns were not legitimate enough.

He then went on to criticize the Bloc members who had raised concerns during the committee, as though somehow they are not justified to vote in favour of it now because of the position they took during committee. In reality, all they are doing is exactly what the parliamentary process instructs us to do.

Would the member from the Bloc not agree that, despite the fact that some of the members of the Bloc may have had some objections during committee, ultimately they have come down on the side of supporting this legislation?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I think there is an attempt to mislead the House into thinking the Bloc Québécois is divided on this issue. I think our position has been made very clear, namely that we must act, and act quickly, for the sake of human dignity.

I would also remind the hon. members of the words of the Liberal Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth: “Evidence demonstrates that this is a practice that does not work. It's destructive, it's harmful and it should not exist.”

That is our position today, in 2021.

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear that the Bloc is supporting this. I am happy to hear they want to see this move through the House expeditiously.

The member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue raised the issue of it going to the Senate. I am just wondering if he has any concerns with the unelected Senate and whether we could have just a handful of Conservative senators take on the Conservative attitude seen here, which seems to be that they support this bill, but they do not like some details because they want to have it both ways.

Is he concerned that the unelected Senate will then unfortunately block this bill before this Parliament ends?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell you what I am especially concerned about.

I am concerned to hear and read comments like those of Mr. Buscemi of Quebec Life Coalition, who stated, “I cannot speak for therapists, but when someone does something that is right and a government says that it is wrong, I would tend to say that we need to do what is right and accept the consequences....Even if it means breaking the law”.

There is something else, and the member did mention it. We may have to have another debate in the House if the Senate does something to stop us from passing common sense bills like the one we are studying. We may have to have another debate in the House, a debate about abolishing the Senate.

• (1810)

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it truly is an honour to be standing here to speak about this very important bill, Bill C-6. As usual, I do my research, I write my notes and then I stand in the House of Commons and decide I am not going to talk about all the things in my notes, but will share some of the experiences I have had as an ally to the LGBTQ community, recognizing some of the relationships that I have built in this community as an ally and speak with their support.

Back in 2018, I was invited to view the documentary *The Fruit Machine* in Ottawa. The director brought forward this documentary speaking about what happened in the Canadian Armed Forces to members of the LGBTQ community from the 1950s up to the 1990s. It is their stories that we need to hear today; we need to talk about what actually happened.

To begin, I would like to thank Sarah Fodey for her work to bring this story to light. Sarah was the director of this documentary and stated:

I want people to leave this documentary angry that this [injustice] happened, and committed to talking about it in their own communities. I also want people to cry and laugh in parts of this film.... [Many of the survivors] have used humour as a way to cope, I suspect.... They are magnetic. You want to hear more from them because they make you laugh on the heels of making you cry. It's a beautiful combination.

We need to look at the history of discrimination against the LGBTQ community in Canada to reconcile what has happened and see how we can move forward. That is why Bill C-6 is something to move forward. I will be honest that there are some concerns. Those concerns are not so embedded in me that I feel we cannot overcome them, but I do understand some of them. We need to look at the history in Canada and what has happened to members of the LGBTQ community. We should have great shame. I know that back in 2018 there were formal apologies from all of the party leaders in the House to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP and some members of the civil service, who lost their positions and careers because they were identifying as members of the LGBTQ community.

Government Orders

I want to back go to the history. As I indicated, this goes back to when the fruit machine was being used. During the Cold War, Canada investigated federal employees and members of the Canadian Armed Forces deemed susceptible to blackmail by Soviet spies. This is 2021 and we do not see that anymore, but back then there was a huge concern that members of the LGBTQ community would be used as collateral. They would be used and held as collateral and they did not know what to do in those positions.

Homosexuality was grounds for surveillance and interrogation by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police under the directive of the newly established security panel. Over the course of four decades, thousands of men and women had their privacy invaded, their careers ruined and their lives destroyed because of this scientific machine and a disgraceful mandate that was put forward.

We ask what this machine was all about. To be honest, when we look at it, we can say it is like conversion therapy. They used this machine. They would hook people up and see whether their pupils dilated. For three years, members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP and the civil servants were put into this situation and had to prove they were not members of the LGBTQ community. This fruit machine was being used to test them, just like a lie detector machine. They were asked personal questions. The types of responses they gave, whether were they stressed or lying, were looked at. We have to understand the discrimination that so many members of this community had gone through while all they were trying to do was serve our great country.

The development of this machine was very riveting. Lots of people wanted to know about it, but it was a failure and after three years, its use was discontinued. The fruit machine story captures the imagination and is truly symbolic of what members of the LGBTQ community were feeling, like conversion therapy. I look at these two things as coinciding.

I look at the way members of our Canadian Armed Forces were treated and think of a story that was published in *The Washington Post* by Todd Ross, who was in naval combat. I want to read this to look at what we have done in Canada, how we can do better and how this bill would move us forward.

• (1815)

It states:

Todd Ross was a naval combat information operator on the HMCS *Saskatchewan* in 1989 when he was called out over the public address system, escorted off the destroyer by officers and told he was the subject of an espionage probe.

Over the next 18 months, Ross was given six polygraph tests and interrogated about his sexual orientation and loyalty to Canada.

Eventually, he broke down. Facing a two-way mirror, he admitted to a stranger what he had not yet told some close confidants.

“Yes,” Ross said. “I’m gay.”

Government Orders

The 21-year-old seaman was given an ultimatum: Accept an honourable discharge or lose his security clearance, effectively extinguishing any prospect of career advancement. He chose the discharge and returned home to New Brunswick, where only a few years earlier he had been named the province's top army cadet.

Ross was one of thousands who lost careers in the armed forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other government agencies during the country's notorious "gay purge" from the 1950s to the 1990s. A legal challenge brought the policy to an end in 1992. Now its victims are gaining greater recognition.

I want to talk about the person who actually started this process. I have been so fortunate to meet her, not only at the status of women committee as a witness, but also through this work she has done on the LGBTQ purge. Her name is Michelle Douglas. Many people are probably very familiar with Michelle Douglas here in Ottawa and the great work that she has done for the LGBTQ community. She was talking about her time in the Canadian Armed Forces. I want to read from a committee report. It said:

The Committee heard testimony that was consistent with the findings of the Deschamps Report: many witnesses described a sexualized and male-dominated workplace where a culture of abuse, discrimination and harassment based on gender, gender expression and sexual orientation exists. Women and individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit or as other gender identities and sexual orientations...are disproportionately affected by sexual misconduct and harassment in the CAF. The Committee was told that, although there is a belief that the CAF is a "gender neutral" workplace, it is not the case. While women can perform brilliantly in military roles, some do so by conforming to and adopting "highly masculine behaviours and, for some, masculine world views, attitudes and values." For this reason, witnesses stressed the need for cultural change to create a more respectful and inclusive workplace for all CAF members. Michelle Douglas, Chair of the LGBTQ Purge Fund, said:

I believe that the military's policy regarding inclusion, particularly towards women—both cisgender women and transgender women—is actually quite good. The military has, of course, all of the things that they must have: pay parity, access to career paths, family support and so on. The establishment of the Sexual Misconduct Response Centre is a good thing and so was the establishment [of things and practices to ensure that we can move forward.]

These are things that I want to talk about because I look at the fact that we are sitting here today and can see how far we have moved forward, but the journey is not over. For members of the LGBTQ community, it is a very important time. That is why I want to talk about what is occurring starting tomorrow, which is the beginning of pride month here in Canada.

I will be honest. Back in 2018, I was really excited to do 160,000 steps for pride. I had gone on the pride circuit and was joining members of the community across this country to celebrate who they are and the fact that they are just the same as me. They deserve the same rights, the same opportunities and equity in this great country.

As I said, pride is such an important time. With pride starting tomorrow, we have to understand where it started. This truly was a political movement. This was because of things that happened in places like the Canadian Armed Forces. We can also talk about New York and things that were happening down there.

This was born out of a fight for the rights of LGBTQ communities. We are doing a really good job when it comes to education, engagement and bringing people together to have these conversations. This is exactly why I am so proud to be a member of Parliament and to have great friends even within this chamber.

Outside the chamber, I also think of my dear friend Anthony who I love dearly and who should be clapping out there. It is great con-

versations with people like Anthony that help me move forward with my own thoughts. Having those types of conversations is very vital to understanding and education.

I will never walk in the shoes of a member of the LGBTQ community. I am a heterosexual woman who is married with five children. I have never been discriminated against because of who I have chosen to love, but I do understand that members of the LGBTQ community have. That is why I think we need to look at these important milestones.

● (1820)

We look back at 1969, when Canada decriminalized homosexual acts through the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Then we look at some things that happened in 1971. There was the first gay rights protest. Across the cities of Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto and in some smaller communities, hundreds of people gathered to protest and to bring forward the rights of LGBTQ communities. It was 1971. That was the year I was born. Fifty years later, we are still talking about it; we still can do better, and Bill C-6 is one of those ways.

I look at 1973, and pride week in 1973. It was a national LGBT rights event held in August 1973 in Ottawa, Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Saskatoon and Winnipeg, so even in two years we saw the growth of this.

However, there was still a lot of discrimination. We can look back at 1981 where, in Toronto there was Operation Soap. These were raids that took place. The police actually stormed bathhouses in Toronto and they arrested almost 300 men for being gay. This was Canada's stonewall. We hear a lot about the stonewall that happened and the movement of pride in the United States that had started to occur in 1969. Operation Soap was one of the largest mass arrests in Canada, and it was over 35 years ago.

When we look at those things, what can we do? We know that the police officers have apologized. The Toronto police chief actually came out and formally apologized. Those are ways of making amends. Those are ways of bringing us together so that we can start having those conversations. Once in a while, it is okay to say, "I did not understand" or "I did not get it". Understanding what some of these men had gone through during Operation Soap is so important, and I really thank them.

In 1988, here in our own House of Commons, MP Svend Robinson came out as the first openly gay member of Parliament. Today, I know that there are many others and I am so proud because, at the end of the day, we are all here representing Canadians. Regardless of who we love, we are all people first and that is what we always have to remember when we are having these conversations. We are all equal. It does not matter who one loves. We are equal.

In 1990, we saw that there was a change, and the indigenous community started to gather in this, and that is when the term “two-spirited” was coined. This was just taking in the concept that when we are speaking about LGBTQ, we understand the rights of the indigenous people who are also of this community.

In 1995, sexual orientation was included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These are things that are progressively getting better, making things better for all Canadians. I am so proud of that. We do know that back in 2000, once again there was another raid. This took place in Toronto and it was a lesbian nightclub that police raided this time. We ask, “why did they do this?” It was because people were homophobic. People were concerned with people’s actions and sexual orientation. To me, it is no one else’s business.

However, as we are talking about this, I do understand also some of the concerns I am hearing from those who are saying there needs to be a better definition. I can still have that conversation. I know that many members in this chamber will sit there and say someone is either right or is wrong. Sometimes they do not have to be right or wrong. Sometimes, there is just something that is so minute that it could make things a bit better. I was listening to my friend from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan and I know he is always pushing for just a bit better.

The reason I am looking at this is the testimony that was brought forward in committee. Timothy Keslick had an English interpreter there, and I want to read his introductory statement. It is just a little phrase, but this is where we need to talk and this is where talking always comes out better and we do not have to think of it as conversion therapy. Sometimes it is just understanding. In Timothy’s opening statement, he stated:

Under this bill, this kind of therapy would be taken away from me. The bill doesn’t make any distinctions between good therapy or bad therapy. The bill would capture my therapy as one that wants to reduce non-heterosexual attraction or, more specifically, sexual behaviour. Without realizing that my therapy isn’t actually trying to stop me from dating any guy, it’s simply trying to stop me from dating the wrong guy. It’s there trying to help me avoid people and situations that would harm me and have already harmed me.

That is why I wanted to bring this up. When we talk about this, there are so many discrepancies on what conversations are, what “talk” is. I do understand. When we see bills like Bill C-10 that are just so poorly written come out from this House of Commons, I understand why many people will say that they cannot trust the current government, that they do not think the government is going to do exactly what they want.

• (1825)

That is why, when I look at this bill, I understand how the government so poorly writes legislation. I get it. It does not mean I have to agree with it, but I understand why there is some conflict within people.

If we look at Bill C-10, for instance, we know that it needs an amendment, but when the government gets the idea that it is right, it doubles down. On this bill it has doubled, tripled and quadrupled down. At the end of the day, I think it is so imperative that we have open and honest discussion. This is why we are having this discussion on what is good and what is bad therapy.

Government Orders

When we are talking about families, I think therapy helps remove the stigma, which is probably one of the most impressive things I have seen over the last couple of years. With COVID, we see that a number of people need to talk to people. I need to talk to people. My colleagues need to talk to people. Once in a while, we just need to bounce an idea off somebody else who is not a family member, or we need to bounce something off somebody who has been in the same situation.

I think of my own case. I do not know of any members of my family who are LGBTQ, and that is fine. Regardless, I am saying it is important that we have these conversations with our children, that freedom of conversation. I think of my son, who will be 18 years old in two weeks. It is important that I talk to him about sex. Members may ask why I want to talk to my 18-year-old about sex. It is because I want to ensure that he understands consent. I want to ensure he understands how to treat a woman. I want to ensure that he has a healthy relationship.

I have come from unhealthy relationships in the past and that is not a good thing. It takes a lot of time for people to be able to find that bright light, so sometimes having these talks is exactly what somebody may need. That is why when I hear some of my colleagues say that Bill C-6 is not a good bill, I understand why they would say the government writes poor legislation. We want to get it right.

I want to go back more to pride, the members of the LGBTQ community and why I will be supporting this bill overall. I look at the fact we have seen things such as the fruit machine here in Canada. We have seen this in our own backyards, where members of the RCMP, the Canadian Armed Forces and members who serve this great country were told they could not participate because they were gay or lesbian.

There is no space in this world or this country for people to not have equal opportunities because they are gay and lesbian. To me it does not matter who people love, as long as they can love. Those are the things I look at. These are the conversations we should be able to have, but because it is so political, we cannot have them all the time.

I have walked on behalf of the LGBTQ community out there, supporting it as an ally, because I know it is the right thing to do. I know that discrimination continues to happen. I have been in pride parades and had people yelling at me for walking in them.

I felt shame for that person who was yelling at me for walking in that parade, but I was so proud to be walking with those other thousands of people who are walking in them. If I am being yelled at as a heterosexual, I can only imagine how the people of that community feel. Sometimes that is what we need to look at.

This is about compassion. It is about how we help people. It is not about changing their sexual orientation. I do not believe that is something we should be focusing on. I believe in healthy lifestyles. I believe in healthy relationships. I believe in talk therapy when it is good therapy, not bad therapy.

Adjournment Proceedings

I do not support conversion therapy and I never will, but I thank everybody for having these conversations, and I ask that we do better once in a while. When we have these conversations, let us not tell people they are wrong just because they are a Conservative. Instead, let us figure it out and find a way of getting there together. Unfortunately, in this place, sometimes we find that extraordinarily difficult.

I will be supporting Bill C-6. It is not perfect, but I believe in the principle. I feel eternally inside of me that I must support members of the LGBTQ community, and that is what I will do.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London will have 10 minutes for questions and comments when the House next gets back to debate on the question.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1830)

[*English*]

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the late show here tonight to follow up on my questions to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health on ending the blood ban in Canada.

This is timely, and this has been said in many speeches today, as tomorrow marks the beginning of pride month. It is the second year in a row we will be celebrating pride month in a different forum. We are not going to have our usual parades, pride events and brunches in every city and many small towns across this country. Rather, what we need to have this year, in lieu of all that, is actual action from this government.

I will remind the government that, in 2015, it promised to put an end to the discriminatory and homophobic blood ban for men in this country who have sex with men. Four years of a majority government, and the Liberals did not do it. In 2019, they promised again to do it, and we are no closer than we were six years ago.

They did not promise to study it. They did not promise to look at it. They did not promise to provide funding. They promised to end it, full stop. During an election, they told gay, bi and trans men in this country that they would get it done. After the election, they claimed that it is out of their hands and there is nothing they can do. If that is the case, and if it is not in their ability to do so, why did they promise to end it in the first place?

People wonder why LGBTQ Canadians look to elected officials, people in positions of authority and power, and do not trust them. They wonder why elected officials and politicians have a bad name. If one is a monogamous gay man in a committed relationship in this country wanting to donate blood and wanting to make a difference, who may have voted for this government in the belief that it would be allowed, that government continues, six years later, to let them down.

With all due respect to the government, there are a lot of members on that side who are the first to show up to a photo op, the first to show up to a pride parade and the first ones to make a statement that makes us feel good, but when they sit on those government benches and have the ability to actually effect a tangible change in this country to the single biggest piece of discrimination that I believe exists in the LGBTQ community today, they stay silent. They attack us, premiers and everybody else, but they do not talk about what they can do to actually resolve this issue.

Conservative governments of the past made a step, and we are now saying that, as the Conservative Party, the tools are here and the solutions are here to be able to do this. The science is clear. The solutions are endorsed by the Canadian Medical Association, the All Blood is Equal campaign, our Conservative caucus, the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Green Party, but there is silence from those on the government benches, and they could actually end this.

The minister has the ability, through the Food and Drugs Act, to remove it. Section 5 says, “The Minister may, by notice in writing, remove a term or condition from an authorization if she or he determines that the term or condition is no longer necessary to prevent a compromise to human safety or the safety of blood.”

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and the Minister of Health know that this tool is available to them. We can change it from being based on sexual orientation and ask that it be based on gender-neutral behaviour.

I ask the government again. I implore the government again to stop the feel-good statements and stop the attacks on everybody else. The parliamentary secretary and the Minister of Health on the government side have the ability to get it done. Pride month is here. It is time for action.

Ms. Jennifer O’Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I found the member’s comments particularly interesting when he asked the government to “stop the attacks”. Perhaps that is because he is quite embarrassed and ashamed of his own members in the previous debate talking about how they will not even support banning conversion therapy. I see why he does not want our side of the House to talk about the Conservatives’ record when it comes to the LGBTQ2+ community.

In regard to the Canadian blood ban, the member opposite ought to know the process. He has many members on his side of the House who were actually in government for 10 years, and if they had been able to just simply remove the blood ban, then why did they not do so? It is because there is actually a process in place. That is the process that continues to be followed.

I will point out that there has been progress and action on this file. In fact, when former prime minister Stephen Harper came into office, there was a lifetime blood ban for homosexual men who had had sex with other men. We have actually reduced that to three months. It is still a discriminatory process. One that we have said many times needs to change. However, the process cannot be changed unilaterally.

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I will get into some of that process and why it exists. Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec were created in collaboration with provinces and territories to oversee and operate Canada and Quebec's blood systems. They were created at an arm's length from government to avoid political interference in the first place, and thus, cannot be mandated to change their blood donation deferral policies, except in extraordinary situations when safety issues arise. This is the foundation of a well-respected blood system that will continue to serve all Canadians.

It is also important that blood donation policies in Canada be non-discriminatory and scientifically based. That is why the process exists to allow Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec to put forward an application to the Canadian government. We are committed to supporting those changes to the discriminatory deferral practice in question, while leaving the other elements of the well-functioning system intact. The Government of Canada, upon receiving this file in 2015, immediately began the process of supporting the blood operators and moving toward an end to the discriminatory deferral criteria for gay and bisexual men, as well as others impacted by these policies.

Once again, the Conservatives misrepresent this process as a way to, I guess, distract Canadians from their positions on conversion therapy, their recent talks about banning or restricting trans health here, as well as recent comments by Conservative members referring to the LGBTQ2+ community as “unclean”. We want to end this discriminatory practice, and we have put in place the process to allow that to happen and move forward, once and for all.

● (1835)

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to start with those comments from the parliamentary secretary. Canadians are expecting leadership from the government, which said it would get rid of the blood ban. That answer was an absolute slap in the face.

As a proud gay man, about 17 years ago I went to donate blood, only to find out that I was disqualified simply because I am gay. Let me tell colleagues that I am a proud Conservative member of Parliament, who is serving under a proud leader of the opposition, who allows me, and my colleagues who back me up, to say that we have come up with a solution. The Canadian Medical Association and the All Blood is Equal campaign have a solution that does not require what the member spoke about with the paperwork and the bureaucracy. She promised during an election campaign to get rid of the blood ban.

Instead of leadership, we get that. Instead of leadership, we get the member and her government taking gay men to court for standing up for human rights and asking the government to keep its promise. No more talking points are needed from Health Canada bureaucrats. What is the solution? The section has been quoted. The minister can do it. The change can be made. When will she act on her promises and get this change done?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, I explained the process, but once again let me clarify this for the member opposite. If he was disappointed years ago when he was going to donate blood, then I suggest he turn around to his colleagues, who sat around the

cabinet table for 10 years and did not move this file an inch. Had they done so, we would have been a lot further ahead.

In the five years or so that our government has been in office, we have contributed \$5.4 million to take action. Forgive me for not having sympathy for the member opposite's outrage over our action in his attempt to again distract Canadians from the fact that his own party today is talking about not supporting a motion to ban conversion therapy. If anyone in the House should be ashamed, it should be the Conservatives for not getting rid of conversion therapy. We will end the blood ban.

● (1840)

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I am disappointed to be rising again today to ask about the question that I brought up in the House a month ago. It is all about the Canada emergency business account and the failure of the government to resolve an issue to allow businesses to apply for the increase in the account.

I rose at the beginning of May to raise this issue and to ask a simple question: When will this be resolved? It has now been nearly a month and there has still been no movement or clarification on when resolution will occur.

As I stated previously, after the announced CEBA expansion in December of last year, many Canadians applied for the expanded business loan. Many were denied, as records held by the CRA did not match their applications. However, there is no method for Canadian businesses to update their submissions.

In January, the government promised to fix this, yet here we are nearly six months later without a solution, leaving businesses to wait for the government to take action. When I asked about it earlier this month, the response I got from the parliamentary secretary was “Financial institutions will be reaching out directly to businesses that have applied for, but not yet received, the expansions that they have requested and we will be providing clarifying information through our banks.”

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To date, my constituents have not been able to update their submissions. One constituent has even provided us monthly updates to let us know that there has been no process put in place for nearly six months, demonstrating consistent proof of inaction. The updates the constituents have received from the banks say the following: "The Government of Canada has not yet finalized the remediation process for applicants to submit corrected or additional information in connection with their CEBA expansion enrolment request." According to the CEBA website, "The CEBA program continues to actively work with more than 230 financial institutions to finalize these processes that will allow select \$20,000 expansion applicants that were previously informed to submit additional information."

I will give some positive news. I know one local business owner who did finally get clarification and was able to update their application just this past week. What was the problem the owner had to wait five months for? The postal code was wrong in the application. It took five months to fix a very simple clerical error in an application.

Owners of another local business, Foxx Salon & Spa, have had to go into their personal savings to keep their business operating. They have had no income now for 10 months, and here they are hanging on by the last thread and taking every last bit of savings they have to try to keep their business afloat while they are waiting for the \$20,000.

I have a couple of simple questions for the government. Of the 230 financial institutions, for how many has the government yet to finalize a process for amending the applications? How many businesses have been able to amend their application since December in order to receive the expanded loan? How many businesses are still waiting in limbo because the government has not prioritized ensuring that businesses can access this vital lifeline? Will the government provide the data and show it has movement on resolving this issue?

The bottom line is the same question I asked a month ago: Will the government commit to a date when it will have this problem resolved?

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

As all members of the House know, the federal government has been there from the start of the pandemic. The priority has always been to support our small businesses and workers. We know that SMEs continue to have difficulty making ends meet because of the pandemic. To date, close to 900,000 businesses have been supported by the Canada emergency business account, and almost 550,000 have already received the \$20,000 expansion.

However, I understand the concerns of my colleague opposite. Financial institutions will be reaching out directly to businesses that have not yet received the expansions that they applied for. We will be providing clarifying information through our banks.

We know that small businesses continue to face problems, as the member indicated, but I am nevertheless very pleased to learn from my colleague that certain problems have already been resolved.

• (1845)

[English]

I have heard my colleague opposite, and let me say on the record that I also have entrepreneurs and small business owners in my riding who are waiting for this clarifying information.

I am very pleased to hear from my Conservative colleague that a few of the entrepreneurs in his riding have managed to resolve the situation. He mentioned that for one, there was a problem in the application, a mistake perhaps in the address or postal code of the business, and now that the problem has been resolved, they have received the additional \$20,000 in financing. It came, as everyone will remember, in the fall with the second wave in order to provide a top-up to entrepreneurs using the important CEBA program.

The banks will be contacting entrepreneurs for this small glitch in the CEBA application process when there is an issue with the application. However, I remind the House that there are numerous other programs that our federal government put into place to support small businesses.

For example, over a year ago, we put in place the regional relief and recovery fund, which has been of invaluable assistance to small businesses. Thus far, we are talking about 141,000 jobs across Canada supported by this particular program. Over 23,000 businesses have been supported by the regional relief and recovery fund.

Let me also mention the rent subsidy program and lockdown support, which have been providing subsidies for commercial rents across the country. Over 180,000 organizations have been supported by that subsidy.

Of course, there is also the emergency wage subsidy, which has been central to our government's response to COVID-19. The wage subsidy continues to help employers of all sizes in all industries affected by the pandemic.

As many people across Canada and particularly in the House know, Bill C-30, which is our budget implementation act currently before the House, proposes to extend the rent and wage subsidies to continue to support entrepreneurs. I hope that all members of the House will support Bill C-30, as it does provide critical support to our entrepreneurs.

[Translation]

In conclusion, our government will continue to ensure that Canada's economy emerges from this pandemic stronger, more inclusive and more resilient than ever before.

[English]

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, I will remind the parliamentary secretary of the same quote I gave before from the financial institutions: “The Government of Canada has not yet finalized the remediation process for applicants to submit corrected or additional information in connection with their CEBA expansion enrolment request.”

On behalf of my constituents and all Canadian entrepreneurs and small businesses owners, including the ones in the parliamentary secretary's riding, whom she just acknowledged are having trouble accessing the same loan, when will the government commit to resolving this process and helping out these small businesses? Is it going to wait until the fourth wave, the fifth wave? We want it resolved now.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely hear my colleague. I hear our entrepreneurs. This is a priority for me and our government, and I will continue to work with both the Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion and the Minister of Finance to ensure that we find a solution to this issue as quickly as possible.

No, we will not wait for further waves. I hope there will not be any further waves. I hope that we are at the beginning of the end of the pandemic. Our entrepreneurs are excited to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

● (1850)

JUSTICE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak this afternoon in response to my March 26 intervention in question period.

The rights of victims to be fully heard and involved throughout the course of their proceedings in the criminal justice system were a priority for the previous Conservative government. The Conservatives have always placed a high importance on victims when it comes to defending their rights. That is why the previous Conservative government worked to implement the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, or CVBR, in 2015. The bill ensures that victims are informed about the status of the release process for offenders and are able to express their views on decisions related to parole. It also promises protections for victims from intimidation or retaliation for such participation.

However, like all legislation, the desired effect may not have aligned with its real-world application. This is the nature of comprehensive and practical legislation. It requires regular review and amendment to ensure that it achieves its desired effect.

In the case of the CVBR, victims themselves have been clear that its shortcomings warrant an overdue parliamentary review. Victims, the federal ombudsman and other stakeholders have already begun our work by highlighting consistent inefficiencies in the CVBR. These include the sporadic and inconsistent implementation of the act, limited training opportunities for criminal justice officials and no public education effort to inform citizens of their rights.

Victims, their families and their advocates are ready and willing to assist Parliament with the required five-year review of the bill, but regrettably it has not yet taken place. Victims cannot wait any

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longer. Thirty years ago, Lisa Freeman was victimized through the first-degree murder of her father, Roland Slingerland. For years she has been advocating for her voice to be heard in parole decisions concerning her father's killer. Despite the implementation of the CVBR in 2015, Lisa still feels as if the rights of the man who has brought such pain upon her family are placed above her own. We can all agree that 30 years is far too long for victims to wait to feel as if the criminal justice system has truly taken their interests to heart.

To Lisa, key shortcomings of the CVBR include its proper enforcement and the fact that legislation protecting offenders' rights often supersedes aspects of the bill. She feels that the onus is on her and other victims to constantly advocate for themselves throughout the justice process. Her concerns have been amplified by the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime's January 2021 report, which states:

The burden of asking for information and to be kept informed of developments in their case is placed upon traumatized victims and survivors at every stage along their criminal justice journey. Many victims simply do not know what to ask for or they assume officials will provide them with the entitlements in the law.

In effect, by not identifying which officials are obligated to provide information, the obligation [to inform victims] falls to no one.

In the high-profile case of Tori Stafford, who was abducted, raped and murdered by Michael Rafferty and Terri-Lynne McClintic, Tori's father Rodney has also been revictimized by faults in the criminal justice system that the CVBR has so far failed to address. In his words, “There's a plan for the offender, but there's no plan for the victim.... Victims don't have a lot of rights and things need to change.” This is unacceptable.

Victims have been asked to sacrifice enough, and through no fault of their own. They should not have to find out about trials after they have occurred or discover their right to submit a victim impact statement after the deadline has passed. They should not be left unaware of the right to information about their federally incarcerated offender or be traumatized by unexpected contact when their offender is released into the community without their knowledge.

More than two months have passed since I asked the minister when the required parliamentary review would take place. On behalf of victims, survivors and their families, I ask this again: On what date will the Minister of Justice initiate the required review of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the topic of victims' rights, an area of great importance to our government and our commitment to a justice system that keeps communities safe, treats victims with compassion and protects the vulnerable and holds offenders to account.

Business of Supply

The Canadian Victims Bill of Rights came into force in 2015 and provided rights for victims of crime in four areas at the federal level, including the right to information, participation, protection and to seek restitution. Implementing the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights has taken many forms and involves all levels of government and agencies that have responsibilities in the criminal justice system.

Over the past six years since the act has come into force, federal, provincial and territorial governments have been moving forward to strengthen its implementation, much of it with federal funding and support through the federal victims strategy.

For example, through the victims fund we have made more than \$28 million available to provincial and territorial governments and non-governmental organizations. Some of these initiatives have focused on training and awareness rising about victims rights. Others have increased access for victims of crime to information and services. In addition, programs have been established to help victims and witnesses participate meaningfully in the criminal justice system and have their voices heard.

Last fall, the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime released a special report on progress made to implement the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. That report concluded that there was more work to do to implement victims' rights, and we are committed to carrying on and strengthening our efforts.

A key recommendation in the federal ombudsman's report is that a parliamentary review be undertaken on the implementation of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. This would be an important opportunity to look at the implementation of the act, take note of its strengths as well as areas where more attention is needed, and reinforce the victims' rights.

The criminal justice system should reflect the needs of those who come before it. That includes ensuring that victims are treated with dignity, compassion and respect. We will be closely following decisions taken by Parliament on the upcoming parliamentary review of the Victims Bill of Rights, and we look forward to that review beginning when initiated by Parliament.

● (1855)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, this parliamentary review is well over a year overdue now. It is difficult to overstate the urgency of the task before us as parliamentarians. Every year, 2.2 million Canadians are victimized by crime. The severity of the crime differs from case to case, but victims' rights can and should be universal. A review of the CVBR is a vital undertaking that will have universal and positive impacts.

I am confused as to why the Liberals, in my previous asking of this question, used the COVID-19 pandemic as cover for their failure to review the Victims Bill of Rights. Meanwhile, the pandemic has not stopped the government from poring every effort into expanding assisted death to those who live with a disability; in fact, it rushed ahead before MAID's own five-year statutory review.

The Liberals have not given pause or second thought to targeting law-abiding firearms owners as their first step, while ignoring the real problem of gang crimes and illegal guns.

Canadians are victimized by crime every day. Why is the protection of their rights once again taking a back seat to the Prime Minister's partisan agenda?

Why has the minister not struck the parliamentary committee yet? What date will it be struck?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, once again, our government has committed to keeping communities safe, respecting victims, protecting the vulnerable and holding offenders to account. This includes continued efforts on our part to support implementation of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. This will also include the ongoing implementation of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights at the federal, provincial and territorial levels. The eventual review of the act by Parliament will be the appropriate venue to study and determine further improvements.

We will continue to take the steps toward creating a criminal justice system that treats victims and survivors of crime with courtesy, compassion and respect.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn, and the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole for the purpose of considering all votes under Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1900)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2021-22

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development in the main estimates, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

The Chair: Tonight's debate is a general one on all votes under the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party. After that, we will follow the usual proportional rotation.

[Translation]

Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 25, within each 15-minute period, each party may allocate time to one or more of its members for speeches or for questions and answers.

In the case of speeches, members of the party to which the period is allocated may speak one after the other, but the time allocated for speeches must not exceed 10 minutes. The Chair requests that each member who speaks indicate how that time will be used.

The order also specifies that when the time is used for questions and answers, the length of the minister's response should approximately reflect the time taken by the question. In addition, the Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent.

[English]

Pursuant to an order made on Friday, May 28, the time provided for the debate tonight may extend beyond the usual four hours as needed to assure there will be a minimum of 16 periods of 15-minutes each.

I also wish to indicate that in committee of the whole, comments should be addressed to the Chair. I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all the established standards of decorum, parliamentary language and behaviour.

Before we get going, I have one further comment. Since the ministers will be joining the debate this evening online, it may be a bit awkward for the chair occupants to assure, when they interrupt, that they guard the amount of time being used. We do not have the usual connection we have in debate in the House. As chair occupants, we will do our best this evening to try to assure that the time taken by the minister in response to a member's question will be similar and equitable to the time the member took to pose the question. We appreciate the patience of hon. members in ensuring this back and forth goes as smoothly as possible, as we have all been doing in this hybrid Parliament.

We will now begin tonight's session.

The House in committee of the whole, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have a question concerning Line 5. What meetings or phone calls has any minister of the government had with any secretary of the U.S. administration regarding this matter and when did those meetings or phone calls take place?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I have spoken on a couple of occasions with the Secretary of State for the United States about Line 5.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, as the minister knows, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission is a binational commission overseen by the governments of Canada and the United States. The commission has become somewhat of a bilateral irritant due to insufficient funding by the Government of Canada.

Is the minister aware of a letter sent by eight U.S. senators to the Canadian government on April 21 of last month voicing their displeasure about insufficient funding by the Government of Canada?

Business of Supply

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I am aware of that. Because the hon. colleague has spoken to me about this situation, it is something we are looking at. At the moment, it comes under Fisheries and Oceans.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I have another brief question about this.

The funding shortfall the U.S. senators and Canadian stakeholders have been talking about is some \$9 million. When one sees the government not taking care of what is a minor issue in the much larger bilateral relationship, the most important one we have, it raises questions about what other files are being neglected.

Eighteen members of the ministerial party wrote to the minister asking him to address this funding shortfall. His colleague, the member for Malpeque, tabled a finance committee report in the House recommending the government address this shortfall.

Therefore, my question is simple. When will the government address this funding shortfall?

• (1905)

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, there are many issues on which Canada deals with the United States. It is a very vast relationship. There are always a number of issues that are in the works. We are looking at the situation that has been brought up by my hon. colleague.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I have some questions on China for the minister, in particular about Canadians held in detention by China.

What was the most recent date government officials communicated with Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor and what was the medium of communication?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, as I understand it, consular visits within the last few days occurred in both Dandong and in Beijing, where the access is through video but with consular officials going to the prisons in question.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I have a question about Canadian, Mr. Hussein Jalil. When was the most recent communication the government had with Mr. Jalil and what was the medium of communication?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, Mr. Jalil is obviously detained in China. We have been asking for access to him for a number of months. I will have to check with my officials on the last time we were able to contact him, but it has been quite some time.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, if the minister would also see if officials could identify the whereabouts of Mr. Jalil, I am sure that would give great comfort to his family in Burlington, Ontario.

I have a question about Mr. Robert Schellenberg. When was the most recent communication the government had with Mr. Schellenberg and what was the medium of that communication?

Business of Supply

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I will have to get back to my colleague on the actual date of the last time we were in touch with Mr. Schellenberg. We, of course, are speaking with Chinese officials about the fact that they decided to invoke death in his case, something with which Canada does not agree.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, is there any information that the minister could shed light on about U.S. efforts to secure the release of Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, we are working with the United States, but I am not at liberty to provide any details.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I have a question about the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which is part of China's belt and road initiative and part of its attempt to export its model of governance throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

The government has joined the AIIB and has already contributed \$50 million in public money to this initiative, and is asking for an additional \$49 million more in the estimates in front of us.

Is the minister aware that Australia recently cancelled two belt and road agreements with China because of the threats that China was presenting to Australia?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, as part of our commitment to promote sustainable development around the world, Canada is a member of several multilateral development banks, and that includes the AIIB as well as other banks such as the World Bank and the IMF.

As part of our partnership in the AIIB, Canada joins countries such as Australia, France, Germany, India, Italy, South Korea and the U.K. in promoting inclusive economic growth. It is something that we will continue to do.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, former President Obama and former Vice-President Biden implored the government not to join the AIIB back in 2016. Their advice looks prescient in light of China's threats over the last five years to our citizens, our economy and our values.

Will the government contemplate doing as Australia has done in withdrawing from the belt and road initiative, withdrawing Canada's membership from the AIIB and halting all further payments?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, we are not contemplating that at this time. The AIIB has adopted the governance structures, policies and best practices of similar and long-standing multilateral development banks.

We are going to continue to work with partners around the world in holding China to account and improving opportunities for our workers and businesses across Canada.

• (1910)

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, the question is about the upcoming Winter Olympics in Beijing.

Will the government be sending a representative to the upcoming Beijing Winter Olympics?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, at this time we are contemplating participating in the Olympics. As we have said on a number of

occasions, it is the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Committees that will decide with respect to the athletes themselves.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, maybe I could be more specific. Is the government contemplating sending the head of government, the Prime Minister, or a representative of the government, such as a diplomat, or other senior representative of the government, such as a minister, to the opening and closing ceremonies of the upcoming Winter Olympics in Beijing?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, no specific decision has been taken with respect to who might go to represent the government.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, my question is about Huawei. Minister Goodale said in May 2019 that the government would make a decision on Huawei before the October 2019 election. In July of that year, he said a decision would be made after the 2019 election. It is now more than a year and a half since the election, yet there has been no decision. Four of Canada's Five Eyes allies have made a decision to restrict or ban Huawei. Canada is unilaterally alone in not making a decision.

When will the government make a decision on Huawei?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, we are certainly very conscious of the need to protect our telecommunications networks and other networks with respect to 5G technology. We have been looking at this matter for some time. We are continuing to do our assessment of the situation, but I want to assure Canadians that we have been very successful up until now in terms of protecting networks with respect to cyber attacks and we will continue to use that approach when it comes to 5G.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, the House recognized recently that China is committing a genocide against the Uighur Muslim minority in Xinjiang in China. The previous minister, on his very last morning in office, made a snap announcement about measures to ban the importation of products from China that had been produced using forced Uighur labour: measures that appear to be ineffective.

Is the government willing to introduce new measures, such as those introduced in the United States to ban cotton and tomatoes from Xinjiang Province, and to introduce tools for the CBSA such as cotton pollen tracing to ensure these products do not end up in Canada?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, my colleague summarized what our current position is, but I will say to him that we continue to evaluate the situation to ensure to the highest degree possible that we are not allowing products into the country that are the products of forced labour from Xinjiang.

Business of Supply

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I have a question on Iran: 85 Canadians and Canadian residents were victims of the shooting down of Ukrainian Airlines flight 752. Their families are still seeking justice. Just two weeks ago, the Ontario Superior Court found that shooting down the flight was a deliberate act of terrorism by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Given the court's finding, and given that this House adopted a motion three years ago calling on the government to list the IRGC as a terrorist entity, a motion for which the government voted, when will the government list the IRGC as a terrorist entity under Canadian law?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, Canada has done this. In fact, it was done by my colleague's government, which listed the Quds Force as a terrorist entity. We have also imposed sanctions on Iran, whether on individuals or entities. A number of the entities on which we have imposed sanctions include IRGC, missile command and air force command. Also we have listed as terrorist entities three regional terrorist groups that are funded by the IRGC.

● (1915)

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, this is a question on Hong Kong. China continues to violate an international treaty registered at the United Nations: the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, which guarantees Hong Kong's autonomy for 50 years from 1997.

Last year, the U.S. sanctioned Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam and 10 other Hong Kong and mainland China officials for undermining this international treaty. Is the government considering similar sanctions on Chief Executive Lam and other officials for this violation of international law?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I share with my colleague our deep concerns with respect to what is happening in Hong Kong, whether it is the national security law or the fact that certain people are barred from running for the legislature in Hong Kong because they are not considered patriotic. It is deeply disturbing.

The 50-year rule seems to have been thrown out the window, as has respect for the Basic Law of Hong Kong and obviously the concept of one country, two systems. We are following the situation, but I agree with my colleague that China is moving much more quickly than it was supposed to with respect to the 50-year period.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I have a question on Russia. Mr. Prigozhin, a Russian, has been sanctioned by Canada's allies and partners in part for his agency's spreading of disinformation throughout western democracies, for his interference in the 2016 presidential election in the United States, and for spreading disinformation via social media platforms in Canada and the United States, much of which actually targeted Canadian government officials.

Is the government considering sanctions against Mr. Prigozhin for these violations of international law and for this disinformation?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for bringing this to my attention. We have imposed over 400 sanctions in recent years against Russia, whether individuals or entities. We always examine the question of imposing sanctions as a judicious tool to be applied as circumstances dictate, and we will definitely be continuing to take that approach with respect to actions committed by Russia.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, has the government made any inquiries or entreaties to join the quadrilateral security dialogue with Australia, Japan, India and the United States?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, we have not made any formal approaches to it, although we certainly watch the quad group and its actions because we are very interested in the Indo-Pacific region. As of now, we have not formally made any requests to join it.

The Chair: Before we move to the next segment, I want to compliment hon. members on the exchange we just had in the last 15 minutes. It was excellent. I am not referring to the content, although that seemed pretty good too, but the exchange and the rather seamless way in which we had questions and responses was exactly what we like to see in a committee of the whole of this nature.

We will now go to the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank the House for this opportunity to appear before the committee of the whole.

I would like to begin by saying a few words about the crisis we are all currently dealing with. The COVID-19 pandemic presents a unique challenge that requires all of us to do our part to overcome it here in Canada and around the world.

We all know that the pandemic has claimed lives and destroyed livelihoods all over the globe, but we must not ignore the profound impact of the pandemic on human rights. This is especially true in countries where political leaders have taken advantage of the situation to restrict civil liberties and trample on democratic rights. The pandemic has exposed and even exacerbated inequalities. Vulnerable populations were the first victims, and unfortunately too many women and children are paying the price.

At the United Nations Human Rights Council, Canada has joined in the call for human dignity and human rights, gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls, as well as inclusion. We have stood up for marginalized populations, and we have worked with our allies to hold several regimes accountable for their actions, including Sri Lanka, Venezuela, Iran, Belarus, China and Myanmar. We have also been strong proponents of digital inclusion and press freedom. The recent diversion and forced landing of a commercial airliner in Belarus reminds us that there is still a lot of work to be done.

While the world continues its frantic race to protect public health, including by developing and distributing vaccines, we must ensure that our actions are centred on human rights and universal access to health measures.

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After all, this pandemic will not end for anyone until it ends for everyone. That is why Canada is supporting fair and timely access to vaccination and other public health measures. This approach will be critical to ending this pandemic.

● (1920)

[*English*]

We know that many of the priorities that I have just presented are shared by our G7 partners. Earlier this month at the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meeting in London, Canada released a partnership action plan on arbitrary detention with full G7 support. The plan turns words into action and further raises the penalty for arbitrary detention. The summit covered a lot of ground. It allowed us to have meaningful talks with our counterparts on a number of pressing international issues.

On the margins of this very fruitful G7 meeting, I was also able to have constructive bilateral meetings, notably with key partners from the Indo-Pacific region. We know that the Indo-Pacific region will continue to fuel global growth in the decades to come. In this context, it is critical that we work alongside our allies to advance peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. In fact, when I met with my Japanese counterpart in London, we agreed on six areas of bilateral co-operation that would benefit both countries and advance common interests in the region. These six areas are the rule of law, security co-operation, energy security, health, trade promotion and environment and climate change. We have also supported efforts to strengthen peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. I had a chance to talk about this with my Korean counterpart earlier this month.

China is, of course, the major player in the region and members have all heard me say before that our bilateral relationship with China is complex and multi-dimensional. China's increasing authoritarianism and coercive diplomacy are challenges shared by all democracies around the world. I can say that many countries share our concern about the arbitrary detention of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig for close to two and a half years. Ensuring their safe return remains my top priority.

Our message to China is clear: The world is watching. More than ever, democratic countries need to stand together to promote values of democracy and human rights. Our approach to China must continue to evolve. We will coexist and co-operate with China on global issues such as climate change. We will compete with and challenge China to uphold international law and we will protect our national interests.

Canada has taken action in addressing arbitrary detention for diplomatic leverage. We are building a common front to oppose this abhorrent practice. Around the world, foreign nationals are being detained arbitrarily and used as bargaining chips in international relations. Such tactics expose citizens of all countries who travel, work and live abroad to greater risk. Countries from every continent are responding.

So far, almost one-third of the world's countries endorse Canada's declaration against arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations. This is a significant achievement, and it reminds countries that coercively detain citizens of another country for political gain

that they will have the eyes of the world turned on them. They face the collective criticism of countries standing together in solidarity.

Arbitrary detention for diplomatic leverage is unlawful. It is unacceptable and it will not succeed. We will always stand up for Canadians in difficulty and distress abroad.

[*Translation*]

Meanwhile, the renewed tensions in the Middle East have reminded us how fragile the peace process is. Eleven days of violence caused a devastating loss of life, particularly among civilians, including women and dozens of children.

We welcomed the ceasefire in Israel and Gaza and urged further de-escalation of tensions. A sustainable long-term solution must be found for both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. Canada firmly believes in the right of Palestinians and Israelis to live with dignity, without fear, and with their human rights respected. We support the principle of two states for two peoples, with both Israelis and Palestinians living within secure borders that are mutually respected and recognized.

Last week, we announced \$25 million in funding to support Palestinian civilians in the region. Those funds will be provided to United Nations agencies and other organizations with proven track records of delivering assistance effectively.

Canada remains firmly committed to working with the international community to achieve lasting peace in the region, and we are offering our full support for the efforts to put an end to the violence and suffering.

● (1925)

[*English*]

The world is indeed facing many serious challenges that call for strong alliances and partnerships. We are using the alliances we have and building the alliances we need. Canada will continue to reinforce our bilateral and multilateral ties with traditional allies, while pursuing new collaboration with emerging partners. This effort starts with our enduring alliance with the United States.

This is an alliance with global reach, but it is rooted in and reliant on the security of our shared continent. It involves, among other things, a path to the modernization of NORAD as part of the road map for a renewed U.S.-Canada partnership that President Biden and the Prime Minister announced in February.

[*Translation*]

In closing, our foreign policy must continue to adapt to respond to today's challenges while reflecting our traditional values, which include promoting democracy, human rights, gender equality, inclusion and the rule of international law.

We are working with our partners to build greater respect for international law. Canada's values and interests are at the heart of everything we are doing on the international stage. I hope that I was able to provide a clear and concise summary of that today.

I thank my colleagues for their time, and I am now ready to answer their questions and listen to their comments.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Chair, President Biden's first bilateral meeting was in Canada. Since then, Canada and the American cabinet members have been working closely, regularly holding virtual meetings and working on ways we can strengthen our relationship and advance common goals. Our two countries are each other's most important ally, and we must closely coordinate on the international stage. The road map for a renewed U.S.-Canada partnership, announced after the first meeting between the Prime Minister and President Biden, as well as the Canadian cabinet ministers, established a blueprint for the ambitious and whole-of-government effort against the COVID-19 pandemic. This road map aims to support our countries' mutual prosperity.

Could the minister please tell us more about the road map for a renewed U.S.-Canada partnership and what it means for Canadians?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, Canada and the United States did agree to an ambitious partnership road map. In fact, I had the privilege of being there when President Biden and our Prime Minister had that understanding last February. We will work together to beat COVID-19, first of all, and ensure that everyone everywhere has access to a vaccine, but we will also fight climate change and accelerate clean growth; we will create jobs and grow the middle class as part of the economic recovery; and we will address systemic racism, which exists in both of our countries.

Canada and the U.S. are each other's closest allies and most important trading partners. United, we will beat the pandemic, and we will build back better for everyone.

• (1930)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, climate change remains one of the greatest challenges of our times. A little more than a year ago, hundreds of thousands of Canadians took part in climate marches across the country. This is an issue that is important to Canadians and, indeed, our government. Climate change is real.

Our government delivers on its promises and took concrete action to address the climate emergency, such as transitioning to net zero, putting a price on pollution and re-engaging on this issue on the international scene. Our government has stated from the beginning that Canada understands that if we do not have a plan to tackle climate change, then we do not have a plan to create jobs and economic growth, but now climate change is an issue being tackled on both sides of the border. Since the road map for a renewed Canada-U.S. partnership was revealed, Canada attended the Leaders Summit on Climate, hosted by President Biden and John Kerry, the U.S. climate envoy.

Could the minister please tell us how Canada and the U.S. will coordinate on advancing climate solutions and protecting nature?

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Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, there should be no mistake about this: Canada and the United States are very serious about tackling climate change, and this was very obvious as one of the items in the road map between our two countries.

Since the road map was revealed, the government also announced at the Leaders Summit on Climate that Canada will enhance our emissions reduction target under the Paris Agreement, known as the nationally determined contribution, or NDC, by 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030. As a signatory to the Paris Agreement, Canada's NDC reflects the highest possible ambition in light of its current national circumstances.

There are many areas where we can co-operate with the United States, whether it is in electric vehicles, methane reduction or providing hydro clean power to the United States. There are many areas where we can work together, and that is our intention, to take a continental approach with respect to climate change.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Madam Chair, I would like to make a few opening remarks to emphasize how central today's process is to our political system.

Members will recall that the Patriotes fought for a truly democratic and accountable government, by virtue of which the legislative assembly grants the government credits, which it must justify before the assembly members.

Having served for over a dozen years, first in the Quebec National Assembly, then in the House of Commons, I know that the process is somewhat symbolic in nature here, in Ottawa, but this does not make it any less important. Also, I wish to thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs for being here today and for his comments so far.

If I may, I will start by saying that, since taking office in 2015, this government has consistently promoted multilateralism and international co-operation, and yet, curiously, the budget for development, peace and security programs is being cut to the tune of \$783,280,420. Meanwhile, needs in these areas have clearly increased internationally and could grow further still over the next year.

How does the government explain this massive cut to international development?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his question.

As he said, I think this is an important process. I believe he is referring to the multi-year projects that were renewed in the previous budget, but I will confirm with Global Affairs Canada officials.

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I also want to reassure my hon. colleague by reminding him that, last year, Canada mobilized close to \$1.7 billion more to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. We recognize how important it is for Canada to play a part internationally.

● (1935)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for her answer, and I would like to ask her the following question.

We know Canada received a certain number of vaccine doses from the global COVAX supply. We also know Canada ordered huge numbers of doses from suppliers, much more than it needs to vaccinate the Canadian population.

I would like the minister to tell us what Canada's plan is for sharing those doses with countries that are in dire need, such as developing countries. As Dr. Tam said, nobody will be protected until everybody is protected.

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Chair, again, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

This is a very important issue. Canada is, of course, committed to ensuring equitable distribution of vaccines around the world. That is precisely why Canada was one of the founders of the COVAX mechanism a year ago, investing the initial \$25 million. Since then, we have been one of its biggest funders, having injected more than \$350 million to enable COVAX to purchase vaccines.

As the Prime Minister said this past December, once Canada finds itself with surplus vaccine, it will distribute doses to the rest of the world. I could say more, but the Chair is signalling that I am out of time.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, I will give the minister the opportunity to continue her response by simply asking her by what mechanism and in what way does the government intend to allow for the redistribution of surplus doses to developing nations?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for the opportunity to respond. We are not there yet, but certainly we will support the COVAX system. As I mentioned, Canada was involved in establishing the mechanism and we really believe that it is the best mechanism for vaccine distribution and redistribution.

In addition, Canada donated \$5 million to establish a vaccine exchange mechanism within the COVAX system. We will absolutely support and promote this mechanism.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, we will be very happy to hear all about how the government plans to distribute these surplus doses. According to the minister, we do not seem to be at that point yet.

Just three out of 15 programs have had a budget increase. One such budget is the statutory item, which increased by \$400,000 compared to last year, going from \$500,000 in 2020-21 to \$900,000 in 2021-22.

How does she explain this increase and are we to expect bills to be introduced in the coming year?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Chair, I have to confirm with officials at Global Affairs Canada on that question, since it is very specific. I can get back to the House with an answer.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, in the main estimates, 2021-22, the government plans to invest \$30,000 in the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples. However, that amount has not changed since 2014-15, when Stephen Harper's government was in power.

The current government claims that indigenous issues are very important, so why has it not yet indexed this amount?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Chair, I can answer that very specific question my colleague asked, but it is quite clear that our government has shown an unprecedented commitment to reconciliation with indigenous peoples. We have allocated billions of dollars to help with various needs of our indigenous peoples.

Our government is determined to proceed with reconciliation with our indigenous peoples in many areas.

● (1940)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, on April 9, 2020, the former minister of foreign affairs and the then minister of finance announced the creation of an advisory panel of independent experts to review best practices in arms exports of states party to the Arms Trade Treaty to ensure that export controls were as robust as possible.

When the acting director general of export controls at Global Affairs Canada appeared before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development in October 2020, she said that the group would be tasked with evaluating permits at several committee meetings. Many witnesses with expertise in the matter told us that no action had been undertaken by Global Affairs Canada and the minister's office to set up this advisory panel of independent experts.

Where do things stand now?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, on the general question of arms exports, that is an extremely serious topic, and I personally take it very seriously, since I am the one who signs off on exporting arms.

I want to assure my colleague that, as he knows, we have signed on to the Arms Trade Treaty, which has a strong focus on human rights. This is a responsibility that I take extremely seriously. We are working with various groups to ensure that the regime in place will guarantee that we will not grant permits if there is a risk of human rights violations.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, it has been more than a year after this announcement, and the advisory panel has not yet been established.

Can the minister assure us that this group will be set up as soon as possible given its importance and its relevance in the current context?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his question.

I will definitely get back to him.

My colleague mentioned that this commitment was made by my predecessor, and I will look into it.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, in September 2020, 39 civil society organizations complained that they were excluded from the process of creating the advisory panel of experts, and that no details had trickled down after the minister's announcement in April 2020. These organizations sent the Prime Minister of Canada a letter to inform him of their displeasure, but this letter has gone unanswered.

Has the government launched this consultation process?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, our government pledged to implement a more transparent and robust arms export system. That is why we became a party to the Arms Trade Treaty. Canada has one of the best control systems in the world, and respect for human rights is enshrined in our legislation on the control of this type of export. We are in contact with various groups to ensure that the terms and conditions of this arms export system are the best for Canada.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, we can certainly expect the minister to take into consideration the views of the groups that expressed an interest in participating in the process. Unfortunately, there was no indication to that effect in his response.

However, the minister said that the Canadian system is among the most robust. The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development heard about a certain number of issues early in the process, before exportation, and downstream after the sales. We discovered that some countries check afterwards, but Canada does not.

What are the minister's intentions in this regard?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I think our recent decision on the export of arms to Turkey demonstrates very clearly that we are keeping a close eye on what we consider to be violations of arms export agreements.

First, my predecessor temporarily suspended such exports last fall. I subsequently made the decision to revoke certain arms export permits to Turkey.

• (1945)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, perhaps we will get some supplementary answers later.

I would now like to discuss a matter of concern to one of my constituents, Ms. Durocher. Her daughter Nathalie Morin has been stuck in Saudi Arabia for nearly 20 years. Ms. Morin recently went to the Canadian embassy. According to her mother and the support

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group, she went there to confirm that she and her children wish to return to Canada. However, the Canadian authorities claim that she went there to confirm that she wants to stay in Saudi Arabia and close her consular file.

Who is telling the truth?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, what I can say is that the Government of Canada remains actively engaged in Nathalie Morin's file. Consular officials are following the case closely and are ready to provide consular assistance.

We will remain proactive in helping Ms. Morin. Due to the provisions of the Privacy Act, no further information can be disclosed.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, I am astounded by the minister's answer because departmental authorities have said Ms. Morin's consular file is now closed.

How can the minister tell the House that consular protection activities are still available to Ms. Morin?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, when we have citizens abroad, their files are always open.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, I am pleased to hear the minister say that Ms. Morin's consular file is still open.

Now I would like to talk about Taiwan.

Canada is a proud champion of multilateralism. It advocates for an approach based on collaboration among all members of the international community. As such, and considering Taiwan's proper pandemic management, certain measures are called for.

People's Republic of China authorities are blocking access to vaccines. What is the government going to do to ensure Taiwan gets access to vaccines?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, to answer the first part of the member's question, Canada continues to support Taiwan's significant participation at international multilateral forums, where it makes an important contribution. We are Taiwan's ally. We have a relationship between our peoples, we are trading partners, and we believe that Taiwan's observer status at the World Health Organization is deserved because it can contribute important information.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Chair, I would like to ask some questions to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on some significant matters, starting with what has arisen in the Middle East with Israel and Palestine in the last number of weeks, where there has been serious escalation. The government put out a statement saying that Canada will always stand ready to support efforts for a two-state solution.

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Does the minister not agree Canada needs to do more than just stand by and we need to actually take action and have an active approach to provide pressure and build the foundations for peace between Israel and Palestine?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I agree with my colleague. Yes, it is one thing to say we favour the two-state solution, but we must proactively try to help in that direction. This morning, I spoke with the foreign minister of Egypt and the foreign minister of Jordan. I have spoken to the foreign minister of the United States. I have spoken to the foreign minister of Israel as well as the foreign minister for the Palestinian authority in Canada, who has said it is hoping to be able to help toward a long-term solution, the two-state solution.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Chair, it offers some encouragement the minister is actively involved, but he does see, I presume, that by standing by until there is an agreement really just supports the status quo and incentivizes the Government of Israel to pursue policies of annexation, of occupation, and further diminishes the rights and increasingly marginalizes the Palestinian people. Would he not agree with that?

• (1950)

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I refer my colleague to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights statement we made last Thursday, where we have been very clear on our position with respect to trying to achieve a two-state solution and particularly with respect to the issue of settlements, which has been a very difficult one and which has essentially been a major stumbling block in finding a two-state solution. Canada is categorical in saying these settlements must cease immediately.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Chair, Liberal governments previous to this one have long supported resolutions in the United Nations holding that the continued occupation of Palestinian territory is contrary to international law.

Do this minister and his government actually agree the occupation of Palestinian territories is illegal under international law?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, Canada's long-standing position with respect to settlements has been that we do not recognize any territories taken by Israel in the 1967 war and our position is these settlements are not legitimate, as well as the possibility of evictions and demolitions that are threatened at the moment in East Jerusalem.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Chair, Canada has objected to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court in its investigation into alleged war crimes by both sides during the 2014 escalation between Israel and Palestine despite the fact Palestine is listed as a state party to the ICC on the government's website.

How does objecting to an independent investigation support Canada's stated commitment to a just and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, Canada strongly supports the ICC and the important work it does as a key pillar of the rules-based international order. Canada continues to respect the independence of its judges and of the ICC prosecutor.

However, Canada's long-standing position is that it does not recognize a Palestinian state because it has not yet occurred and therefore it does recognize the accession of such a state to international treaties, include the Rome Statute.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Chair, recently we have seen a dramatic rise in anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic acts in Canada, including in the wake of recent events, which we condemn strongly. What will the government do to address this rise in anti-Semitism in Canada and ensure that members of the Jewish community are protected from this evil?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, it has come to the heart of my own riding, where swastikas were painted on the doors of the synagogue barely 100 yards from my home and we saw violence in recent demonstrations and anti-Semitism in my own riding near Montreal's Israeli consul general. The Prime Minister, myself and other members of government have been speaking out forcefully that it is critically important that we condemn all demonstrations of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in this country.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Chair, I want to turn now to arms exports. Thanks to our efforts in the foreign affairs committee, we recently received and made public documents that show that Canada has not been doing its due diligence on arms exports.

Will the minister commit to enhance Canada's arms export regime to ensure that end-user adherence takes place by recipients of all Canadian military exports?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, as I said before, I take this very seriously because I sign export permits. A recent example of us rescinding arms permits to Turkey because of violations of the agreement is a clear indication that we take this issue extremely seriously and that there are strict conditions associated with providing arms export permits.

• (1955)

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Chair, one has to wonder how Canadian WESCAM sensors ended up in Nagorno-Karabakh during last fall's conflict there.

We also have an allegedly strong human rights interest internationally, yet Saudi Arabia's human rights violations are appalling and Canada continues to sell it arms, \$3 billion worth in 2019 alone. How can the minister continue to say that we are committed to international human rights when we continue to sell arms to a country that is fuelling the war in Yemen and has been called out by the United Nations Security Council on this issue?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, yes, Saudi Arabia is guilty of human rights violations within its own country. We have worked hard to improve the specific contract that he is talking about that was signed by the previous government to meet Canada's international human rights obligations and preserve, at the same time, jobs within Canada.

The cancellation of the current contract has important financial implications for Canada, but over and above that, we will not hesitate to take action if we feel there are any violations of human rights. That was part of our agreement when we ratified the Arms Trade Treaty.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Chair, I would like to turn to nuclear disarmament, which is of great concern to Canadians, 80% of whom want to see Canada work toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. Three out of four Canadians want Canada to join in the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Why does Canada continue to refuse to do so?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, Canada unequivocally supports global nuclear disarmament. We are committed to take concrete steps toward a nuclear-free world. This includes the important work that Canada is doing on the development of a fissile material cut-off treaty that will help to halt the production of material for nuclear weapons. Canada has been and remains an important player in global nuclear disarmament. We remain entirely committed to that goal.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Chair, we need to bring about the end of nuclear weapons in the world. This particular treaty is one aspect. Canada has long had a reputation or fostered a reputation for being at the forefront of this issue. What are we doing now, in addition to this treaty that the minister just mentioned?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, as my colleague knows, we share the same objective of seeing a nuclear-free world. We also have to deal with what is possible. Canada acknowledges that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons responds to concerns about the pace of recent progress toward disarmament, but to make progress toward a nuclear-free world, united action is needed, including from states that possess nuclear capabilities. That is why Canada supports the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation and disarmament architecture.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Chair, the situation in China has deteriorated quite rapidly over the last several years. In Hong Kong, it has rapidly eroded over the last year, and even the last few weeks, with Jimmy Lai recently being sentenced to another term in jail for participating in a demonstration. However, Canada has still not imposed any targeted sanctions in respect of these matters.

Will the minister make a commitment to apply sanctions to put pressure on key individuals within the Chinese and Hong Kong governments in relation to what is going on in Hong Kong?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, Canada always makes judicious use of sanctions. I agree with my colleague that the situation in Hong Kong is extremely preoccupying. Canada has consistently voiced concerns about Beijing's imposition, first of all, of the national security law, alongside our international partners, and other assaults on Hong Kong, as its high degree of freedom was promised under the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

We will continue to speak out against what is happening and, most recently, against the decision to prevent less than a quarter of citizens from running for the legislature and the decision that they must prove they are patriotic to China to be electable.

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● (2000)

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Chair, pro-democracy activists in Canada have been targeted for speaking out against the Chinese government. In fact, we had two individuals before the Canada-China committee tonight, one Canadian who is of Tibetan ancestry and a Uighur, who had been targeted with impunity by the People's Republic of China and their agents in Canada, with no recourse for them or anybody else in the same circumstance. However, we have not really seen a concerted effort from the Liberal government to combat this foreign interference and pressure. Activists are pretty isolated and vulnerable and do not think we are acting fast enough.

What is the minister and his government doing to communicate to China that this is completely unacceptable? What measures are being taken to protect Canadians in these circumstances?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, my colleague raised an important matter. Canada is concerned when any country shows irresponsible and destabilizing behaviour, including interference in a country's democratic system. In December, the Minister of Public Safety publicly outlined the threats related to foreign interference and the critical work of the security and intelligence community in a letter addressed to all members of Parliament.

We work in close collaboration with allies and partners around the world to counter foreign interference. We know that more needs to be done between allies and partners to discourage these malicious acts. We welcome the work undertaken by the national security and intelligence committee. As colleagues know, Canada, in 2018, when it hosted the G7 in Charlevoix, announced the rapid response mechanism for the G7, which is aimed specifically at the issue of disinformation.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Chair, in the situation with foreign interference and the treatment of the Uighurs, which was just mentioned, Canada has not yet resolved the cases of Michael Spavor, Michael Kovrig and other Canadians in prison in China, including Huseyin Celil.

What can the minister tell us about what Canada is doing to ensure that these Canadians will be returned home soon?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I want to make this point very clear. The release of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig has been my number one priority, as I have said publicly. We cannot go into details on what we are doing to try to secure their release, but we are working extremely hard on this issue.

With respect to Mr. Celil, who is a Canadian citizen, we have been pressing the Chinese government to have consular access to him.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Chair, I will now talk about Ethiopia and the Tigray situation. The last statement from the government was April 8, yet there has been widespread rape by soldiers, and the Ethiopian and Eritrean military have cut off humanitarian access to most of the region's four and a half million people.

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Will the government call for a ceasefire to put pressure on the Ethiopian government?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, we have been pressing. The Prime Minister has spoken to his counterpart and I have spoken to my counterpart. I agree with my colleague's assessment of the dire situation in the Tigray region.

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, good evening to all members attending today's committee.

With the rapid rollout of vaccines, I am optimistic that we will be able to reopen our economy, and with the investments we are making in budget 2021, we can look forward to a strong, sustainable and inclusive economic recovery.

Our government's COVID-19 economic response plan has protected millions of jobs, provided emergency supports to countless families and kept businesses afloat throughout the pandemic. We have had the backs of Canadians and businesses since day one.

Budget 2021 sets us up to finish this fight against COVID-19 and to keep Canadians healthy and safe, all the while building a better, fairer and more prosperous future for generations to come. The time to act is now and this budget puts us on the right path. However, this is not 2009. We cannot afford to take a decade to recover from the COVID recession.

• (2005)

[Translation]

We are taking prompt, decisive, responsible action.

[English]

We are making ambitious and targeted investments to accelerate job and business growth, driving toward faster recovery than if we did not take any action. This is the most small-business friendly budget in Canadian history.

We are extending the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency rent subsidy to September, with flexibility to go further than that if public health measures require it.

We are also announcing new supports to bridge the recovery, such as the Canada recovery hiring program, as 500,000 Canadians are still unemployed or have reduced hours because of the pandemic. We will invest \$600 million so that businesses can hire more workers or increase hours and compensation for those they already have.

We also announced significant investments to support the success of diverse entrepreneurs through the Black entrepreneurship program, the women entrepreneurship strategy and investments for indigenous entrepreneurs. This is part of the greater action our government is taking to make our economy more inclusive and to bridge the gaps that racialized and under-represented entrepreneurs and businesses have faced for far too long.

[Translation]

Budget 2021 is ambitious.

[English]

It will not just get us onto the road to recovery. It will take us where we need to go to be competitive, to be more prosperous and to become even more resilient. Since my first day as minister, I have been focused on ensuring that businesses have the tools they need to start up, scale up and access new global markets. COVID-19 and our economic recovery have only increased the importance of this work.

Our businesses need the tools and the financing to compete in today's economy. That is why we are expanding the Canada small business financing program loans of up to \$500,000, with a potential line of credit of up to \$150,000, to provide liquidity for start-up costs and intangible assets, such as software for data management and supports for intellectual property. We have also committed to taking decisive action to lowering credit card fees for small businesses, helping to make consumer interactions more beneficial so that our main streets can be even more competitive.

Beyond financing, we want to ensure that our Canadian entrepreneurs have the expertise and tools to protect their Canadian innovations in the increasingly intangible global economy. The pandemic has greatly expedited the shift to the digital economy. More businesses have gone online in the last six months than in the last 10 years.

The pandemic has also shown the importance of businesses needing the latest tools, technologies and expertise to compete. In budget 2021, we are investing \$4 billion for small and medium-sized businesses to go digital and to adopt new technology so they can grow and be even more competitive. This will support some 160,000 businesses and create jobs for nearly 30,000 young Canadians.

[Translation]

It will ensure long-term post-recovery growth and competitiveness.

[English]

Today, our small businesses are just a click away from being exporters, and we want to support as many as possible to grow around the world, while anchoring their success here in Canada, and to create jobs.

We have seen another global shift, one to sustainability. We know that the environment and the economy go hand in hand, which is why we have also announced \$1 billion over five years to help draw in private sector investment for Canadian clean tech projects, ensuring that they remain competitive and on the cutting edge of innovation. This will help us reach our target of net-zero emissions by 2050. Through this budget, we are setting up our businesses to start up and scale up now, and to be ready to succeed and thrive in the economy of the future.

While travel has been limited through COVID-19, I have not let it slow us down in our efforts to create opportunities for trade and investment, to diversify our trade and to develop solutions to supply chain challenges, especially for essential goods. COVID-19 should not and cannot be used as an excuse to stop trading or to turn inward with protectionist policies.

International trade has been critical to create jobs and opportunities for growth. This is truer in our economic recovery more than ever. By working to implement the new NAFTA, CETA and the CPTPP, Canada's businesses are able to access new markets to expand their companies.

[Translation]

Canada and Canadian workers from coast to coast will benefit.

[English]

We have continued our work to ensure that Canada's 14 free trade agreements, including the new NAFTA and the recent trade continuity agreement with the United Kingdom, continue to serve Canadian interests and Canadian businesses, entrepreneurs, workers and families.

Earlier this month, I met with my Mexican and U.S. counterparts to discuss the implementation of the new NAFTA, and to work together on our shared priorities, such as the environment, labour and inclusive trade, for our shared economic recovery. From steel and dairy, to forestry and clean tech, we have the backs of Canadian businesses and workers in all sectors.

Our government has pivoted during the pandemic to support Canadian businesses through virtual trade missions to France, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea; through the first Canada-Africa clean growth symposium; and through our virtual CETA road show last year. With over 2,000 entrepreneurs attending, we have made international trade more accessible. We have led over 150 business-to-business connections for our Canadian businesses.

We continue to take a team Canada approach to help businesses and entrepreneurs succeed here at home and abroad with Canada's trade tool kit: the Trade Commissioner Service, Export Development Canada, the Business Development Bank of Canada, the Canadian Commercial Corporation and Invest in Canada. They are all working together and focused on supporting Canadian businesses and their needs.

Budget 2021 will support the Trade Commissioner Service by providing \$21.3 million over the next five years, and \$4.3 million on an ongoing basis, to boost Canada's clean tech exports. We will work with our international partners and multilateral institutions to reduce unnecessary trade barriers and restrictions, keep supply chains open and build back a more resilient and inclusive economy. We will continue to work together, as we have done throughout the pandemic, including through our work on the WTO's trade and health initiative, to ensure that our essential health and medical supply chains remain open and resilient.

Crucially, we must also continue our hard work with one another and with all of our international partners to find solutions that accelerate the production and equitable distribution of affordable, effective life-saving vaccines. The pandemic is not over anywhere

until it is over everywhere. We are committed to continuing our work toward a speedy and just global recovery.

I look forward to answering questions.

● (2010)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, one of the little-known success stories over the course of the pandemic has been Canada's leadership on the international stage in ensuring that our supply chains remain open and that countries do not turn inward and adopt protectionist policies.

I wonder if the minister could elaborate a bit on the important work that Canada has done at the World Trade Organization, including but not limited to our leadership of the Ottawa Group at the WTO, to ensure that all countries and all peoples have access to important life-saving medical supplies, and that our economies have access to all of the inputs required to ensure a robust economic recovery.

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, Canada is a trading nation. Nearly two-thirds of our economy and millions of Canadian jobs depend on international trade and investment. As we prepare for a strong and inclusive economic recovery, international trade is going to be crucial to generate growth and create jobs.

People, businesses and the economy benefit from stable, fair, predictable, rules-based trade. Canada is a strong proponent of multilateral rules-based trade, with the World Trade Organization at its core. As a founding member of the WTO, Canada is leading the efforts to modernize and improve the organization.

We have been leading the Ottawa Group with international partners. We have been championing the health and trade initiative at the WTO to remove barriers. We are determined to find solutions with our partners and WTO members that will accelerate the production and equitable distribution of vaccines.

From the very beginning, Canada has been at the table and working to resolve potential barriers to vaccine access, whether they are IP or supply chain constraints, or export restrictions. That is the work we have been working on. Through our leadership with the Ottawa Group, Canada is committed to working with all members at the WTO for a more inclusive, modern, resilient and transparent system for all.

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Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Chair, I would like to ask the minister for a little more information on something she mentioned in her earlier remarks. I understand the minister was able to meet with her CUSMA counterparts.

For the benefit of all members in the House, I am not sure if everybody realizes that one in six jobs in Canada is supported by exports to either Mexico or the United States. I am hoping the minister could give us a few more details on this important meeting on the new NAFTA and its implementation.

● (2015)

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, very recently we, my colleagues from both Mexico and the United States and I, held our first free trade commission meeting. It was a terrific first meeting. I might also say it was a historic one, where the trade minister, the trade representative and the secretary of economy were all women. We met to discuss the new NAFTA's implementation. We also talked about our shared priorities for recovery, which include the environment, labour and inclusive trade.

Canada's long-standing relationship with the U.S. and Mexico is an important one. Trade in North America creates jobs and economic prosperity for people in all three countries. Our people ties, as well as our business ties, have built one of the most competitive trade regions in the world. We talked about how we could advance climate action, how we can promote digital trade in North America and how to make sure that our economic recovery from COVID-19 is both sustainable and inclusive.

The new NAFTA is historic. Ensuring that we work together to create North American competitiveness for our economic recovery was what our meeting was all about.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Chair, I was very pleased and quite proud when I saw Kearney's Foreign Direct Investment Confidence Index of this year. In 2021, Canada rose to second place, up from fourth place in 2015.

Obviously there is a robust foreign direct investment strategy that our government and our minister, in her leadership, was able to implement. I wonder if the minister would like to comment on that aspect and on our foreign direct investment strategy.

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, it is very encouraging to see that, despite the pandemic, global investors clearly see Canada as an attractive investment destination. For a second year in a row, as my hon. colleague said, Canada has held the number two spot on Kearney's Foreign Direct Investment Confidence Index.

Canada remains a top destination within the G20, and our economy is expected to rebound 5% in growth in 2021. We are attractive to investment because of our diverse population and our highly skilled and well-educated workforce. We know that foreign direct investment will play an important role in our inclusive, sustainable economic recovery from COVID-19.

It was very heartening for me to lead a number of virtual trade missions abroad. This is taking Canadian businesses abroad so they can access those global markets, but it is also featuring our very best entrepreneurs and businesses in those international markets to attract those foreign investments in Canada.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Chair, the Prime Minister promised to negotiate a softwood lumber agreement in the first 100 days following his 2015 election. It has now been three U.S. administrations and over 2,000 days since the election. How many more days until an agreement?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, Canada's forestry industry is incredibly important. It supports hundreds of thousands of jobs across the country. We have been steadfast in supporting them. At every opportunity, I have raised the issue of softwood lumber with the United States—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

● (2020)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, does the minister know how many jobs in the forestry sector have been lost since 2017?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, it is our position that we will continue to defend the softwood lumber and forestry sector, and—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, according to a recent natural resources committee testimony, almost 11,000 jobs were lost in the industry since 2017. Are these job losses a priority for this government?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, jobs and workers are always our top priority. We will defend the forestry sector, and we have reiterated to the United States that the best solution would be a negotiated one.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, if these jobs are a priority, does the minister have a plan to get them back?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, we are very committed to working with our Canadian industry to stand up for their interests, businesses and their workers, and work with the United States on a—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, how many times has the Prime Minister brought up negotiating a softwood lumber agreement with the U.S. President since 2015, which was when we last had an agreement?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, we have a new U.S.-Canada road map for economic recovery. As part of that, we have raised softwood lumber with the President. I have also raised it with the commerce secretary, as well as the USTR.

We will continue to do this for our forestry sector.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, how many times has the minister met with U.S. counterparts to discuss negotiating a softwood lumber agreement?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, my officials and I meet with interlocutors, from legislators to worker representatives to business owners, and we continue—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, how many times has the minister met and specifically spoken about a softwood lumber agreement with her specific counterparts?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I raise it at every opportunity. I meet with worker representatives, and I work with business representatives. I have reiterated that it is in the interests of all to have a negotiated agreement between Canada and the United States.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, it was reported that Katherine Tai, the U.S. trade representative, stated, “In order to have an agreement and in order to have a negotiation, you need to have a partner. And thus far, the Canadians have not expressed interest in engaging”.

Minister, do you agree with her statement?

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I remind the member to ask her question through the Chair, please.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I have had an opportunity to meet with my U.S. counterpart. I have raised it at every opportunity, and I will continue to do so.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, maybe I will ask this in a different way.

Is Ambassador Tai's observation correct?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I think I have already said that I have raised this issue and have reiterated that an agreement—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, well, the question is referring to Ambassador Tai's statement and whether or not her statement is accurate when she said that Canada has not expressed an interest in engaging.

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, as I said, I have discussed this with my hon. colleague, the USTR. I have discussed it with the commerce secretary. I have raised it with the President. We will continue to work with the United States on this issue.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, when questioned last week at the natural resources standing committee on negotiating a softwood lumber deal, Canada's natural resources minister said that the U.S. has not been willing.

Minister, do you agree with his statement?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, I rise on a point of order. The member is continually referring to the minister saying, “minister do you”. The rules are quite clear that all questions must go

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through the Chair. I know you have already indicated that to this member.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I would remind all members to ask their questions through the Chair. Please do not tell me how to do the job, either in questions of time or how to address me.

The hon. member.

• (2025)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, I will ask the question again, through you.

Canada's natural resources minister, when questioned last week at the natural resources standing committee on negotiating a softwood lumber deal, said the U.S. has not been willing. Does the minister agree with the statement?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, what I have shared with the USTR is that the current duties that are being imposed are unfair and unwarranted. The preliminary results of the second administrative review—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, Minister, is your cabinet colleague's statement correct? Do you agree with your colleague?

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The question is to be through me.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, this is a really important issue. I will continue to work with the United States, as we have been, through the USTR, through our various interlocutors—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, we have to remember that it was the Prime Minister who commented that the U.K. did not have the bandwidth to negotiate a deal with Canada, which was a comment the U.K. official adamantly denied. The facts are the U.K. was negotiating and signing deals all over the world.

Therefore, whose statement should we believe at this time? Do we believe that of the U.S. trade representative or that of Canada's natural resources minister?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, the question was about the Canada-UK Trade Continuity Agreement, and I am very pleased that we have passed that. We are looking forward to beginning negotiations with the United Kingdom for a trade agreement between our two countries.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, the comment had to do with having a minister, or a prime minister, make a statement that is then countered by another government disagreeing.

On February 27, 2020, the Conservative members from the trade committee wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister outlining all of the adverse impacts of CUSMA on softwood lumber, and how CUSMA does nothing to prevent the United States from applying anti-dumping and countervailing duties to Canadian softwood lumber.

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Does the minister regret not negotiating softwood lumber into CUSMA?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, we have reiterated to the U.S. at every opportunity that a negotiated agreement is possible and in the best interests of both countries. I look forward to continuing to work with United States on this matter.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, what is the game plan now?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, our work has been consistent in standing up for the interest of Canada's forestry sector and the workers that it employs and working with the—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, on a different topic, does the government support Taiwan joining the CPTPP?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, the CPTPP is a high-standard agreement that welcomes accession for economies and countries who wish to meet the high standards of the CPTPP, and those decisions are made by the CPTPP member countries together.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, in my questioning earlier today on forced labour measures on products from Xinjiang, the minister said that measures are still being operationalized. I wonder if the minister can explain what this means. Are they not in place yet?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, we are working to operationalize the forced labour ban, and we are doing that by engaging a whole-of-government approach with our colleagues in labour and the CBSA. We will continue to stand up—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, how many shipments have been stopped by the government's forced labour measures?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, we continue to work on this very important issue. We will always advocate for human rights around the world, and we expect that our companies operating around the world operate at the highest standards.

• (2030)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, I am looking for a number. Exactly how many shipments have been stopped by the government's forced labour measures?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, as I said earlier, our government is actively working to operationalize the forced labour ban with my colleagues in both labour and the CBSA, and we will continue to do this work together with our international partners to ensure that Canadian businesses operating here and—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, looking at the taxpayer dollars going into the Invest in Canada Hub, how many taxpayer dollars have gone into this organization since its inception?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, that is a very specific question on the numbers, so perhaps I could get that information and get it back to her in another answer. I will get it from my officials.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, the Invest in Canada Hub was created as a corporation in 2018. What is its mandate and how does

this work into what the current measures and benchmarks are for this organization?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, the Invest in Canada Hub is a single-window service for high-impact investors who wish to make investment into Canada for our terrific businesses here and to create great jobs in Canada. I am very proud of its work—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, let us pick one important way of measuring that does fit into its mandate. How many new companies has this taxpayer investment brought into Canada?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I would like to highlight a couple of really terrific success stories. One is with Sanofi Pasteur just very recently, where we attracted investment of \$415 million to support building an influenza vaccine manufacturing—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, was Mastercard a beneficiary of services from Invest in Canada?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, Mastercard, indeed, has opened up operations, even during this pandemic, in Vancouver to expand its operations into Canada and—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, Mastercard Incorporated's earning release for their first quarter in 2021 financial results had a net income of \$1.8 billion. How can the minister justify spending taxpayer dollars on a massively profitable company such as this?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I would highlight another terrific company called HCL Technologies, which is based in India. It is a multinational technology firm that has invested in Canada, because it sees the talent and opportunities here are immense and it wants—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, does the Invest in Canada Hub promote foreign direct investments in Canada and facilitate that investment from foreign state-owned enterprises?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, Invest in Canada conducts its work in the interests of and in response to Canadian trade policy—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, what is the dollar value of yearly Canadian exports?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, through my department officials, let me get that information back to her at a subsequent answer. I do not have it at hand.

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am very pleased to be here today to speak about the main estimates as they relate to Global Affairs Canada's international development portfolio.

It is now over one year since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and it has not been an easy journey for our Canadian or developing country partners. With more than 160 million cases and three million deaths globally, many countries are experiencing a third wave and the highest number of new weekly cases since the start of the crisis. New and worrying variants are contributing to this deteriorating situation, including, as we have all seen so heart-wrenchingly over the last few weeks, in India.

The scale of what many are facing in developing countries is clear to everyone. We recognize that the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic have resulted in increased levels of poverty and social inequality. The World Bank has estimated that between 119 million and 124 million people may be pushed into extreme poverty due to COVID-19, reversing development gains earned over the last two decades. This has been especially notable for already disadvantaged groups, including women, who have at once been on the front lines of care and who, in many places, have also seen their economic empowerment undermined by lockdown measures.

The pandemic has also triggered an unprecedented food security crisis that is expected to cause an additional 270 million people to fall deeper into hunger.

Students around the world are continuing to experience school disruptions, the debt situation of vulnerable countries has continued to deteriorate and challenges related to accessing sufficient financial liquidity and maintaining economic stability have not diminished, particularly for least-developed countries and small-island developing states.

COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of lives and livelihoods, but Canada is committed to contributing to a robust, coordinated and determined global response that builds back better and strives to leave no one behind.

Since February 2020, Canada has committed more than \$2.5 billion in international assistance in response to COVID-19. These funds have been directed, for example, toward life-saving assistance to deliver emergency health care; increased disease surveillance and infection prevention; provision of water, sanitation and hygiene; and to support continuity of education for children through programs run by our CSO partners in countries like Afghanistan and Colombia.

Canada has also advocated in several high-level forums such as the G7, G20, World Bank and the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement Lead Group for the prioritization of nutrition, empowerment of

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women and girls and food security at all levels of the pandemic response. Over half of these funds, more than \$1.3 billion, will help facilitate equitable access to COVID-19 medical countermeasures.

● (2035)

[Translation]

We are strongly committed to the work of the access to COVID-19 tools, or ACT, accelerator and of all of its pillars, including the COVAX facility and its advanced market commitment, so that we can work toward a world where everyone everywhere has access to a safe and effective vaccine. It is an honour for me to be a member of the ACT facilitation council and to co-chair the COVAX AMC Engagement Group. Through these platforms, we have committed funding to accelerate the development and production of diagnostic tests, treatments and vaccines for COVID-19 and to facilitate equitable access for low- and medium-income countries.

Canada also supported global efforts to stabilize the economies of developing countries and prepare them for a green, blue and purple recovery. Through our joint initiative with Jamaica and the Secretary General of the United Nations on financing for the development in the era of COVID-19 and beyond, Canada is working with the international community to develop practical approaches designed to respond to the socioeconomic and financial impacts of the pandemic, namely the increase in debt levels and liquidity problems. This work builds on the leadership Canada has demonstrated over the past five years with regard to financing sustainable development goals.

[English]

Throughout this global crisis, Canada's feminist international assistance policy has proven to be a robust and strategic framework, focused as it is on those actions that support the poorest and most vulnerable populations. In the midst of this robust pandemic response, we have, in parallel, continued to implement our pre-COVID core international assistance commitments and to achieve results and impact.

For example, in the 2019-20 fiscal year, 65 million children were immunized through Canada's support to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance; 3.2 million women were provided sexual and reproductive health and rights services through the her voice, her choice initiative; more than 300 women's rights organizations were supported through the women's voice and leadership initiative; 33,796 teachers were trained according to national standards; over five million entrepreneurs, farmers and smallholders received financial or business development services; and 11,005 peacekeepers were trained to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.

We also continue to make progress toward our overall commitment to direct 95% of bilateral international development assistance to initiatives that target or integrate gender equality by 2021-22.

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Moreover, in February, I launched the together for learning campaign, which will help refugees and forcibly displaced children and youth access to education they need and deserve.

These initiatives and others were strategic and targeted to what was needed most by the communities we support. They made a considerable difference in the context of the pandemic, reinforcing resilience and our wider sustainable development efforts.

Before I conclude, I would like to turn to the main estimates.

To assist with the pandemic response, the Public Health Agency of Canada transferred \$705 million in 2020-21 in new funding for international partnerships to Global Affairs Canada to support access by developing countries to COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics. This includes the procurement and effective delivery and administration of vaccines and therapeutics. The Public Health Agency of Canada will be transferring \$75 million later this year in additional support for this pillar to be disbursed in 2021-22.

Additional funding provided to Global Affairs Canada in 2020-21 to support our international assistance response to COVID-19 included \$120 million to support the ACT-Accelerator and \$400 million to support the humanitarian and development response to COVID-19. More recently, in budget 2021, the government committed an additional \$375 million to further support Canada's international COVID-19 response in 2021-22. These resources will also be directed to the ACT-Accelerator partnership.

These investments have been critical to our international assistance efforts to respond to the acute health impacts of the pandemic and will contribute to supporting a sustainable and equitable recovery for all.

This has been an unprecedented year. Our government is committed to implementing the feminist international assistance policy, and we are working hard to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through these efforts, we are achieving results and generating positive impact, helping to build a more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world for all.

• (2040)

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Chair, the previous administration emphasized reducing child mortality and improving maternal health in an effort to eliminate the preventable deaths of women and children in developing countries. These goals have also been focused on within the minister's mandate, but this is also half the story. A truly holistic approach must also incorporate the understanding that women deserve to have autonomy over their own bodies and promote them being able to make choices about whether to start a family and when to grow their family.

Could the minister elaborate on how the government's inclusion of a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights fills major gaps in the previous approach?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for the question; it is an important one. It was important to focus on reducing maternal, child and newborn deaths and improve their health. However, we recognize that much of this work can only be done when we support women's autonomy over their body, over their

right to choose, and the fact that they also need to have access to sexual health and reproductive health rights and services.

When we were elected in 2015, we were elected with a mandate to ensure that Canada's international assistance provided this support. In 2016, the Prime Minister announced the "her voice, her choice" initiative, which contributed \$650 million to sexual health and reproductive rights.

That was further elaborated on in 2019 at the Women Deliver summit in Vancouver, where Canada made the \$1.4-billion-per-year Thrive commitment. Half of our support will go to SRHR, sexual and reproductive health and rights, with a particular focus on the neglected areas, recognizing that it is an imperative development outcome to ensure that women's rights are fully achieved and that they have full autonomy over their bodies.

• (2045)

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Madam Chair, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on already vulnerable people around the world, from refugees and other displaced people being unable to protect themselves and remain socially distanced, to access challenges faced by humanitarian workers, to challenges in delivering assistance amidst ongoing conflict and security heightened by restrictions on movement. Increases in gender-based violence have also been a major concern.

How has Canada adapted our approach during the pandemic to continue helping vulnerable people who are facing humanitarian crisis?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Chair, right from the get-go, Canada recognized that we would need to pivot our response to ensure that we were addressing the needs on the ground. In fact, one of the very first things we did, given the border closures, the closures of airspaces and the challenges in humanitarian assistance to be delivered, is that we supported the World Food Programme, which is the humanitarian arm, but also the logistical arm, of the United Nations. We provided it with an immediate grant so that it could support the UN Humanitarian Air Service to deliver life-saving interventions, particularly to vulnerable populations in remote areas.

We have also heard from partners on the ground, recognizing again that we need to further deepen the localization agenda and ensure that local partners have the capacity to respond on the ground. Unlike in previous epidemics, there has not been an ability for the international community to mobilize when the pandemic is truly a global issue.

Canada worked with our humanitarian partners, with local women's rights organizations on the ground and with LGBTQ2+ organizations on the ground that really were on the front lines of the pandemic response, and quickly forwarded resources to them so that they could scale up their responses.

We also provided additional support to existing partners and programs so they could purchase PPE and continue delivering the life-saving support they were providing, among a number of other initiatives.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Madam Chair, the feminist international assistance policy was unveiled a few years ago. It was groundbreaking in its approach and set important goals for our international assistance. A key goal was that 95% of Canada's initiatives are meant to target or integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by 2021-22.

How are we progressing? Are we on track to meet this ambitious goal?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Chair, I am exceptionally proud of the amount of work that Global Affairs Canada has done on implementing the feminist international assistance policy, or as we like to call it, the FIAP, in terms of ensuring that gender equality is integrated into our programming. We are well on track to meet this objective.

In fact, for the second year in a row, Canada has been the top funder of women's rights organizations in the world, but also when it comes to gender equality. Canada is leading not only with our values and with our words, but also in terms of where we are putting our resources. From the conversations that I have had with partners on the ground around the world, it is making a difference. It is being felt, and Canada is recognized as a true leader in gender equality, the world over.

• (2050)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be asking questions.

Canadians have been horrified by the discovery of the remains of 215 children at a residential school in Kamloops. Every child matters.

In the summer of 2020, Canadian officials travelled to the Kurdish-run al-Hol prison camp in northeast Syria to repatriate a five-year-old Canadian child, Amira, rescuing her from the horrific and life-threatening conditions faced by children in prison camps in northern Syria.

However, more than 20 Canadian children were left behind, and the majority of them are under six. When the previous foreign affairs minister was asked about the situation, he said, "We had one orphan, and we brought her back. We should all be happy with that."

Does the current minister agree with the approach of his predecessor? What can the government say to children who remain behind about what it intends to do?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Chair, we are certainly aware of Canadian citizens being detained by Kurdish authorities in northeast Syria, and we are particularly concerned with cases of Canadian children in Syria. Canadian consular officials are actively engaged with Syrian Kurdish authorities to continuously seek information on other Canadians in their custody.

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Let me be clear about something there. It is a Criminal Code offence to travel abroad to engage in terrorist activity, and our government takes with the utmost seriousness the threat posed by travelling extremists and returnees of Daesh.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, I was speaking about the cases of children under six. Is the minister insinuating that some of these children were Daesh fighters?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, no, but those children belong to parents.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, those are Canadian children under six in prison camps, who are not responsible for the crimes of any of their family members.

Is the government working to secure the release of these children? Is the government taking the plight of these children as seriously as it is taking the cases of other detained Canadians, such as the cases of the two Michaels?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, those children are in the custody of their parents. Parents have control with respect to their children.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, is the government providing a path to Kurdish authorities and to parents for minors who are in these prison camps to be able to come home?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, let me be clear, again. It is a Criminal Code offence to travel abroad to engage in terrorist activity, and our government takes with the utmost seriousness the threats posed by travelling extremists and returnees of Daesh.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, my questions were about children under six, but the questions have gone unanswered and we need to move on.

Is the government taking the case of Hussein Jalil as seriously as it is taking the cases of the two Michaels?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, the short answer is yes. Absolutely, we are. We are trying to get access to Mr. Jalil.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, earlier tonight the minister said that securing the release of the two Michaels was his top priority.

Is securing the release of Mr. Jalil and other Canadians who are dual nationals a top priority as well?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, the answer is yes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, has the minister raised the situation of Mr. Jalil with the Biden administration?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, we are deeply concerned about Mr. Jalil and continue to raise his case at senior levels in China, and we will continue to do so until we get consular access in order to determine his well-being and offer him assistance.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, the minister is well aware that that is not the question I asked. Has the minister raised the Jalil case with the Biden administration?

Business of Supply

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, that is information that we, as a government, do not share.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, does the government still believe that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, absolutely.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, then why is it very clearly treating the cases of some detained Canadians differently from the cases of other detained Canadians?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I reject the premise of that question. We treat all Canadians who are arbitrarily detained with the same urgency. That is what our government feels is absolutely necessary, and it is part of our values.

• (2055)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, in 2010, Speaker Peter Milliken ruled that Parliament has an unfettered right to send for documents. Does the minister agree with Speaker Milliken's ruling, and is he committed to complying with all requests for documents from Parliament and parliamentary committees?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, we try to always comply with requests from committees, but we also have to take into account that there are commercial and other private or very sensitive security interests that also have to be taken into consideration.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, that is a direct repudiation of the Milliken ruling, because the Milliken ruling says that these various important factors are factors that the committees have to take into consideration when determining what documents to make public. The ruling was very clear: Parliament and committees' right to send for documents is unfettered, and it is up to the committees to make those judgments.

Does the minister agree with the Milliken ruling, yes or no?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, in answer to the question, committees may make requests, and it is civil servants who apply the rules in deciding what can be provided and what cannot be provided or has to be blacked out for security, or privacy, or commercial reasons.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, the minister, then, is very clearly on the record that he rejects the Milliken ruling and does not believe he has to comply with it, because his description of what is required of him is completely at odds with the Milliken ruling.

The New Humanitarian and the Thomson Reuters Foundation have reported speaking to over 40 women in the Democratic Republic of Congo who were offered work in exchange for sex by World Health Organization employees during the Ebola crisis of 2018-20. It is appalling to see so many from the World Health Organization using their power to sexually exploit women during a health crisis.

When did the government first become aware of these allegations? What actions have been taken by the Government of Canada in relation to them, and what is it prepared to do to hold the World Health Organization accountable?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for raising what is a very important issue. We became aware of these issues as they were

reported, and we have been in discussion with the World Health Organization. Canada, alongside like-minded countries, has démarched the WHO on this specifically, recognizing that those who are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence need to have adequate access to justice, and we are following this topic very closely.

Canada has a policy with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse. We are following that policy closely, and we will continue to advocate on behalf of survivors as well as—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, access to justice is important; so is addressing systematic issues at the World Health Organization, because this is a very high number of victims and a very high number of employees involved.

What is the minister going to do to insist on systematic change at the World Health Organization to ensure that Canadian dollars are used in a way that is consistent with Canadian values?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Chair, we always try to ensure that Canadian dollars are consistent with Canadian values. In fact, this is why we have raised this issue with the World Health Organization, both as a matter of access to justice and as a matter of ensuring that sexual exploitation and abuse do not occur in the World Health Organization on a systemic—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, with respect to UNRWA, the minister has continued to falsely claim that the statements I previously cited were in a Palestinian authority textbook as opposed to UNRWA-produced materials, but the fact is that UNRWA has directly produced materials that explicitly denounce peace agreements like the Abraham Accords.

Why is the government continuing to fund the production of materials that denounce peace agreements when peace is something we so desperately need?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Chair, when it comes to peace in the Middle East, this government has been very active. In fact, we just announced \$25 million in humanitarian assistance in response to the latest violence, \$5 million of which is going to peace-building initiatives, something we know is desperately needed in the region.

When it comes to UNRWA, I have been taking this issue very seriously and working with international colleagues to address the problematic educational materials.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, there is a desperate need to promote peaceful co-existence, but it does not explain why the government is funding the production of materials that denounce the Abraham Accords and other peace agreements.

Will the minister clearly articulate for the House, but also for the international audience watching, that this is a red line, that organizations that explicitly produce materials denouncing peace should not expect Canadian funding, and that if they continue to produce these materials, they will lose their funding? Is the minister prepared to draw that clear red line?

• (2100)

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Chair, I would just note that for the first time in 15 years, Canada is providing funding for peace-building initiatives, something that Canada used to do before the funding was cut by the previous government under Stephen Harper. We need to advance these people-to-people ties to advance the peace agenda, and what we hope will be a two-state solution so that Israelis and Palestinians can live in security, in peace and with their full human rights.

When it comes to problematic educational materials, this is something I am addressing. I take allegations of anti-Semitism—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, with respect to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Chinese state-controlled development bank, has Canada been able to bring about any changes in policy with respect to gender equality, environmental policy, human rights or corruption?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Chair, as the member opposite will know from each time he has questioned me on this, this is actually under the purview of the Minister of Finance. I am not the governor for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, but we do recognize in Canada that it follows the same rules as other multilateral development banks, and Canada as—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, I am happy to have a different minister answer the question tonight.

My question is this. Has Canada being at the table brought about any changes in AIIB policy with respect to gender equality, environmental policy, human rights or corruption? I expect that somebody involved in foreign affairs would know the answer to that.

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Chair, as I have mentioned to my hon. colleague on several occasions, the governor for the AIIB is actually the Minister of Finance. That being said, Canada advances gender equality and environmental policies, as well as human rights and fighting corruption, in all international fora in which we engage. That is a consistent approach by Canadians in every single multilateral organization—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, I had asked for specific instances. Clearly the question was not answered.

I would like to ask about Afghanistan. There is concern about the impact that the impending American military withdrawal in Afghanistan could have, in particular on the precarious situation of minority communities.

What steps is the government taking to support the rights of these communities, with particular reference to Hazaras, Sikhs and Hindus?

Business of Supply

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, Canada has invested a great deal in Afghanistan, both in lives lost and in treasure. We certainly do not want to lose any of the gains that we have made with respect to women, children and minorities. We are determined to preserve those gains as NATO and U.S. troops pull out.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, again, could I please ask the minister to be more specific? We have the Hazara community, the Sikh and the Hindu communities that I specifically mentioned. There have been calls for action for years on the immigration front, with respect to the Sikh and Hindu communities in particular, from those who are ready to sponsor them. Major concerns have been raised by the Hazara community.

Is the government making representations on these issues? What concrete steps is the government taking?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I can tell my colleague that those are issues we are very much aware of, and so is the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Chair, the people on the ground are very aware of them as well, as are members of the House, but awareness is not sufficient when someone is a government minister. I hope that we hear more and that more action is taken on that.

I want to return to a question my colleague asked, with respect to the Beijing Olympics. The Minister of Foreign Affairs said, “No decision has been made about who will represent the government”. The House has already unanimously voted on seeking the relocation of the 2022 Beijing Olympics. If the Olympics proceed in Beijing, my contention would be that the Government of Canada should decline any invitation to have the government officially represented at those events as long as the Uighur genocide is ongoing.

Is the government prepared to say no to sending representatives to Olympic games that are happening in a country that is committing genocide, or has the government decided to send a representative, but not decided who it will be yet?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, our government is deeply concerned by the reports of egregious human rights violations against the Uighurs and other ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang autonomous region. We have announced sanctions targeting individuals and entities implicated in the repression, in coordination with like-minded democracies. We will continue to call for unfettered access to the region so that independent investigators can report first-hand.

Business of Supply

That said, we must recognize the independence of the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Committees with regard to Canada's participation in the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

• (2105)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am pleased to speak in committee of the whole about the work of Global Affairs Canada.

I will focus my remarks on Canada's concerns with respect to the increasingly coercive diplomacy practised by China.

[*Translation*]

I would like to start off by stating clearly that Canada will always protect and defend human rights around the world. That is an integral part of our foreign policy. We remain deeply concerned about the serious violations of human rights in the Xinjiang region, the troubling situation in Hong Kong, and the arbitrary detention of Canadians.

As we have always said, it is essential that Canada work with its partners to ensure that China respects its international human rights obligations.

[*English*]

Human rights are top of mind. We are seeing a crackdown on human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists in China, as well as on ethnic and religious minorities.

Our top priority for now is securing the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, who are being arbitrarily detained. It is unacceptable that any citizen anywhere should be arbitrarily detained. Our government will continue to work tirelessly to secure their immediate release. The thoughts of all Canadians are with Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor and their families during these difficult times. Canada will continue to advocate for their release [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] both directly with Chinese authorities and with partners and allies on the world stage.

[*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to all of our international partners and allies who have joined in expressing concern. This includes 23 like-minded partners whose embassies sent diplomats to the trials of Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor. They did so in solidarity with these two men, and they echoed Canada's message that these detentions [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] are unacceptable. We said clearly that Canada remains deeply troubled by the lack of transparency surrounding these proceedings. Canada is also deeply concerned by the arbitrary sentencing of Robert Schellenberg. We call for clemency for him and for all Canadians facing the death penalty.

Canada continues to work with our allies to end the abhorrent practice of arbitrary detention and to uphold the rule of law and the rights of citizens around the world. This was demonstrated earlier this year when Canada [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to lead collective efforts to denounce and put an end to coercive, arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations by launching the Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations. So far, more than 60 countries have endorsed Canada's declaration. This declaration clearly reminds countries that coercively detain citizens of another country for political gain that the world is watching. Arbitrary de-

tention for diplomatic leverage is unlawful, it is unacceptable and it will not succeed.

Canada also remains deeply concerned over the rapid deterioration of rights and freedoms in Hong Kong. Recent actions of the Chinese central government have stifled political participation and represent a further abrogation of China's commitment to preserve Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy, its Basic Law and the one country, two systems framework.

Canada strongly supports a one country, two systems framework under Hong Kong's Basic Law. We call for the continued adherence to this framework and to the rule of law. The fundamental rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong must be guaranteed. Canada is working with its international partners to hold Hong Kong and the Chinese central authorities to account for breaching international obligations that commit them to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of Hong Kong residents.

• (2110)

Since this law was enacted in July 2020, Canada has taken concrete actions. We suspended the Canada-Hong Kong extradition treaty. We started treating exports of sensitive goods to Hong Kong in the same way as those destined for China. We updated our travel advisory. The Minister of Immigration announced a series of immigration measures to address the situation in Hong Kong. We will continue to urge authorities in Beijing and Hong Kong to uphold their international obligations under the China-Great Britain joint declaration.

As we have repeatedly said, we remain concerned by the human rights situation in China. We also remain deeply disturbed by the troubling reports of human rights violations in Xinjiang. The Chinese government continues to deny any possibility of human rights violations against Uighur people. It rejects any accountability for wrongdoing and actively seeks to discredit victims and those who chose to speak out.

When it comes to egregious human rights violations against the Uighur population, our message to China is clear: The world is watching. We cannot ignore China's mounting systematic campaign of repression and deplorable treatment of Xinjiang. In March, Canada joined key allies to call on China to put an end to its repression of the Uighurs. We want to hold those responsible to account.

Let me be clear. We take allegations of genocide and crimes against humanity very seriously. It is why we have repeatedly called for an international investigation in response to allegations of genocide. This investigation must be conducted by an international and independent body so that impartial experts can observe and report on the situation first-hand.

Canada has taken concrete action on this issue. On January 12, we announced a comprehensive approach to the human rights situation in Xinjiang, including measures to address forced labour. On March 22, in coordination with the U.K. and the U.S., and in solidarity with the EU, Canada announced new sanctions against four officials and one entity for their participation in gross and systematic human rights violations in Xinjiang.

We have also raised our concerns alongside our partners in the UN, including before the UN Human Rights Council and at the UN General Assembly. On May 12, Canada co-sponsored a virtual event at the UN in New York alongside 15 other countries to raise awareness about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. Canada's message to China is clear: The world is watching.

Co-operation between like-minded countries is fundamental in order to face the greatest challenges. Canada must continue to work with its allies and stand up and defend Canadian interests. When it comes to our approach toward China, it must and it will [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. That means we will co-operate with China on areas where we can, such as the fight against climate change, and we will challenge it on other areas such as human rights. As well, we will compete with and challenge China to uphold international law and protect our national interests.

We need to stay nimble and adapt while protecting Canada's interests, upholding core principles such as human rights and defending the rules-based order and multilateral institutions. The eyes of the world are on China, and we will continue to press for accountability and respect for human rights consistent with our values as Canadians.

This government continues to stand up for human rights around the world and has continued to play a key role through diplomatic engagement throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We all know the China of 2021 is no longer the China of 2016. As the minister stated before, our bilateral relationship with China is complex and multi-dimensional.

For the past couple of years, this relationship has presented its challenges and continued to evolve. We also know many of our international partners are facing similar challenges. It has been stated many times that Canada believes it is essential to work with our closest allies to have a united approach when it comes to China.

Could the minister please explain to the committee how he is collaborating with our like-minded partners on this crucial issue, and in particular with multilaterals such as the G7 and the Five Eyes?

• (2115)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Chair, our approach toward China is based on the four Cs: coexist, compete, co-operate and challenge. That means, yes, we will trade with China when it is in our interest. It also means we will co-operate with China in areas where we can, such as the fight against climate change, which concerns all of us, and we will challenge it in other areas, such as human rights, as we have done. The imposition of sanctions against four Chinese officials by Canada last March was a clear demonstration and we acted multilaterally. That is when we have the greatest effect.

Business of Supply

Canada also believes it is essential that democratic countries work together to promote values of democracy and human rights. We need to stay nimble and adapt while protecting Canada's interests, upholding core principles such as human rights, and defending the rules-based order and multilateral institutions.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Chair, Canadians Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor have been unlawfully detained in China for over 900 days. All Canadians are worried about both of them. Our government has been working tirelessly on their release while staying in touch with the families of Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor and providing consulate assistance. Canada has also been working with its closest allies and like-minded partners to exert diplomatic pressure on China.

Can the minister provide an update on our government's efforts to ensure that Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor are both imminently released?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, the arbitrary detention of Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor is a top priority. It is my top priority. We will continue to work tirelessly to secure their immediate release. We believe these detentions are arbitrary and remain deeply troubled by the lack of transparency surrounding these proceedings.

Canada will continue to provide consular support to Mr. Kovrig, Mr. Spavor and their families. I am in regular contact with their families, who are going through an extremely difficult period. We thank our international partners who have demonstrated solidarity and support to Canada and to Michael Spavor, Michael Kovrig and their families.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Chair, I would like to thank the minister and his department for his continued work in supporting the families and trying to move forward on the important cases of Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor.

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, as my hon. colleague expressed, every Canadian knows about Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig. We count every day they are in detention. This is something that has provided great angst to Canadians and we are determined to secure their release. We are using every means at our disposal to try to achieve that aim.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Thornhill, and my questions are for the Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion.

Business of Supply

First, concerning the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, does the minister acknowledge that Canada gave up part of its sovereignty over dairy policy by eliminating class 7?

• (2120)

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, our supply management system is fundamental to the overall success of Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry. That is why in the negotiations for the new NAFTA our government fought hard to maintain three pillars of Canada's supply management system: production control, pricing mechanisms and import control. Let's remember—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, tomorrow is World Milk Day, and I think that Canadian producers have the right to know if the Liberal government agreed to cap our exports of non-fat dairy solids and if it sees this as a gain for Canadian producers.

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, it is important to remember that the U.S. administration was calling for a complete dismantling of the supply management system, and our government defended and preserved the system from a very strong U.S. attempt. Today, we continue to work to ensure that we are standing up and helping our Canadian dairy producers—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, instead of reading out talking points, could the minister tell us how many dairy farms there are in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I would say to the hon. member that this is an incredibly important industry that we defend and help export. We help those businesses and those workers in this very important—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, does the minister know how many people work on those dairy farms?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I know that my job is to steadfastly ensure that the agriculture and agri-food sector is helped and supported, particularly during this difficult time of COVID-19 and certainly into—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, when was the last time the minister spoke with her American counterpart about the dairy issue?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I had the very good opportunity to meet with my USTR counterpart at a free trade commission recently, and while there, I always tout the importance of our agri-food and our agriculture sector, including—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, it is too bad that the minister does not seem to care about Canada's dairy industry.

Did she bring up the United States' decision to dispute the free trade agreement on the grounds that the Canadian market was closed to the U.S.? Did she bring this up with her counterpart?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, we are certainly disappointed that the United States requested a dispute settlement panel, but what I would say is that we are very confident in the administration of CUSMA and that we take our obligations seriously and that we are in compliance.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, does the minister acknowledge her part in the failures regarding the cap on the sale of non-fat dairy solids and the loss of sovereignty over dairy policy in the latest agreement, which means that this agreement was poorly negotiated for Canadian dairy farmers?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, we will always stand up for our Canadian dairy industry and protect Canada's supply-managed system, which is what we are doing. We will continue to do this with our American counterparts. We are confident, as I said, that we are meeting our obligations under CUSMA.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, why have the minister and the government still not announced compensation for supply-managed dairy farmers in connection with CUSMA?

• (2125)

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, we absolutely believe in a strong supply-managed system. It is critical to our farmers and to Canada's food security, and we will always defend it. We have not granted further access to supply-managed sectors in—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Business of Supply

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, when will the compensation be announced for Canada-U.S.-Mexico trade for the products of Canadian farmers and dairy farmers?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, we have committed \$1.7 billion of compensation to our dairy farmers. We continue to stand up for them and the terrific contribution they make to Canada's economy.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, no compensation figures for CUSMA have been announced, yet the minister claims to defend the dairy industry and know her portfolio.

Can the minister tell us when supply-managed producers will get details about the compensation for CUSMA?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I want to assure the hon. member that our work here and the protection of the supply-managed agricultural producers, farmers and workers is something that we work steadfastly on. I work with my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, to support their long-term success. We have committed \$1.75 billion in compensation for our dairy farmers. We will continue to stand up for our Canadian dairy farmers.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, the minister does not know the difference between the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and the recent Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement.

I am not talking about the \$1.7 billion for the two other announcements.

When will compensation for the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement be announced?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I want to assure the hon. member that we will continue to work to support our dairy farmers in Quebec and throughout Canada.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Chair, my questions will be for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

On June 12, 2018, the minister stood in the House and voted yea, along with the Prime Minister and the public safety minister and with an overwhelming majority of members, 248 yeas to only 45 nays, in favour of a motion to immediately designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a listed terrorist entity under the Criminal Code of Canada. This was for the entire IRGC, not just our Conservative government's listing of the Quds Force, behind which the public safety minister regularly attempts to dodge the question.

Why do this minister, now responsible for foreign affairs, and the Prime Minister continue to defy the will of Parliament and their own votes in favour of the motion to list one of the worst terror organizations in the world today?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Chair, in fact it was under my hon. colleague's government that the Quds Force was listed as a terrorist entity, and we agree

with that; and several other regional terrorist groups that Iran finances have also been listed as terrorist entities. We have also sanctioned individuals in the IRGC as well as entities including the missile command and the air force command. We believe that the sanctions that have been applied are the right ones to apply against those different organizations.

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Chair, that answer brings one to recall a very different but similarly controversial vote when the minister improperly attempted to abstain from the Uighur genocide motion on behalf of the entire Government of Canada. He and the cabinet did not vote at all, even though most Liberal MPs did vote yea.

Back to the IRGC and Iran, given that a judge of the Ontario Superior Court has now ruled that the shooting down of the Ukraine International Airlines flight was an intentional act of terrorism, why will he and the Prime Minister not fulfill the will of Parliament now and list the IRGC as they voted?

• (2130)

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, there are a lot of things that we have said about the Iran government. It is a state sponsor of terrorism. It is a country that does not respect human rights. It is a country that is always trying to defy its denuclearization obligations. We will continue to criticize Iran, going forward, and will not hesitate to do so.

With respect to PS752, we have taken note of the judgment of the judge in Ontario and we, of course, are working toward ensuring that the families of the victims receive the proper compensation through negotiations.

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Chair, in 2017, a petition signed by 15,000 Canadians called on the Government of Canada to achieve the release and return of two Israeli bodies held by the Hamas terror regime in Gaza. Now today, as the minister mentioned, Egypt is attempting, at very long odds, to achieve a lasting and durable truce between Hamas and Israel. Canada has just committed \$25 million in aid to Gaza.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs is the one who is dealing with the Egyptian initiative, might it not now be appropriate to make this financial assistance conditional on the return of those two Israeli bodies and two other Israeli captives?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, we know that one thing Israel is negotiating for is the return of the two bodies and the two civilians. Our \$25 million in humanitarian assistance is intended to go to, first of all, the most pressing basic needs, such as food, water and medicines, and to funding for reconstruction and what we call peacebuilding. That is how Canada is assisting in Gaza. We think this is an important contribution that will help to stabilize things.

Business of Supply

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Chair, Ambassador Rae was a principled politician, and he is a principled diplomat. However, any Canadian familiar with the last century of international politics knows that the policy positions Canada often speaks to at the United Nations today are as anachronistic as they were at the time when a majority of member nations of the world body were democratic.

I know the minister is relatively new in his position as Minister of Foreign Affairs, but I am wondering if he believes that time is overdue for Canada to more forcefully champion meaningful reform of the United Nations, which in many ways is a dysfunctional and corrupt organization.

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, the United Nations is not a perfect organization. It has many bodies, some of which perform extremely well and others which could do better in terms of reform. Canada has taken the position that it is important for us to engage with this global multilateral organization to make positive contributions to its functioning. We believe that role, rather than simply criticizing, is the best approach for making the United Nations the organization that we would all like it to be.

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Chair, the Liberal government has repeatedly accepted implausible assurances from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency that Canadian dollars are not misused to condition Palestinian children to hate and to aspire to terrorism and martyrdom in war against the State of Israel. Successive and respected NGOs have regularly provided hard evidence that UNRWA's teachers and the teaching materials they use, which we have heard discussed again tonight, deny the legitimate existence of Israel, glorify terrorism and encourage children to wage jihad against Israel.

To the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the minister responsible for the entire department, when will Canadians stop hearing empty promises to investigate, stop the funnelling—

The Deputy Chair: I have to allow for the minister to respond.

The hon. minister.

• (2135)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Chair, I take allegations of anti-Semitism extremely seriously. As the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor who spent time in Theresienstadt and Auschwitz and made their way to Canada, I take this seriously. We are taking it seriously. However, if there is one thing I will not do, it is deny education to 500,000 Palestinian children. That was denied to my grandfather by Nazi Germany, and I will not do that for any child around the world.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would like to take the time this evening to highlight some of the important work that has been done by this government, especially by my colleagues on the Standing Committee on International Trade, over the last year.

COVID-19 has presented serious challenges for Canadian businesses looking to export and for the global trading system as a whole. Our government has been keenly engaged on these issues from the very start.

[Translation]

In October, the Standing Committee on International Trade heard from official representatives on Canada's efforts to support exporters and to position Canada as a leader in the post-pandemic recovery.

Officials noted the important work being done by the Trade Commissioner Service, which leveraged its irreplaceable network of international contacts in business and government, as well as its knowledge of Canada's industrial capabilities, to facilitate the acquisition of personal protective equipment, vaccines and other essential supplies needed to fight the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada.

[English]

Throughout the pandemic, the Trade Commissioner Service has continued to help Canadian businesses connect with global opportunities and partners. Adapting to new challenges, the TCS has served 10,000 clients through virtual tools and services, and has provided more than \$33 million in support through the CanExport program to companies looking to diversify their export markets.

The TCS and Export Development Canada, along with the Business Development Bank of Canada, the Canadian Commercial Corporation and Invest in Canada, are all part of what we call Canada's trade tool box. These organizations have all been working together, along with our provincial and territorial partners, with a team Canada approach to help businesses and entrepreneurs succeed at home and abroad. They will continue to do so as we recover from the economic effects of the pandemic and adopt new ways of doing business.

Continuing on from a study that began just days before the start of the pandemic, the Standing Committee on International Trade has resumed studying the World Trade Organization and the Canada-led efforts through the Ottawa Group to push for reforms of the organization to ensure that it can continue to face the increasingly challenging global trading environment. Here, again, officials laid out the important work that our government is doing to leverage the WTO in support of the global COVID-19 response and the post-COVID economic recovery. Our government is committed to a comprehensive global response to COVID-19 that leverages the entire multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, in reaching a rapid and just end to the pandemic.

Since the pandemic began, our government has worked with international partners to advocate for open trade and free-flowing supply chains and to identify barriers to accessing vaccines and other medical products. This includes Canada's leadership role in the WTO Ottawa Group. Canada continues to actively engage on the trade and health initiative at the WTO, which aims to strengthen global supply chains and support the delivery of essential medicines and medical supplies, including vaccines around the world.

We know that the pandemic will not end anywhere unless it ends everywhere. That is why Canada has committed to discussing an international property waiver for COVID-19 vaccines under the WTO TRIPS agreement. We are committed to finding solutions and reaching an agreement that accelerates global vaccine production and does not negatively impact public health.

Canada will continue working closely with all WTO members, including engaging on new proposals from any member or group, in seeking a consensus-based outcome to address any intellectual property challenges created by COVID-19. Canada also continues to encourage the WTO director general's global dialogue with the pharmaceutical sector toward accelerating the production and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and other medical products, in coordination with other relevant organizations.

● (2140)

Our government remains committed to continued engagement with all members of the international community to find solutions to these global challenges.

More recently, the Standing Committee on International Trade and the recently established special committee on Canada-U.S. economic relations have been studying a wide range of areas to position Canada to continue to grow our exports and Canadian businesses.

COVID-19 has propelled a green recovery. Canadian clean-tech firms are driving economic growth and are heavily reliant on exports, with exports increasing 26% from 2015 to 2019, from \$8.4 billion to \$10.6 billion. The Government of Canada's \$17.6-billion green recovery investments announced in budget 2021 build on the \$3.3 billion in previous investments since 2016 to promote clean-tech research, development and adoption. This commitment helps to ensure that Canadian clean-tech firms are competitive and well positioned to export.

Our close economic ties to the United States will also be of vital importance to Canada's COVID recovery. That is why Canada is engaging the U.S. administration, members of Congress and allies across the U.S. to advocate for a Canada-U.S. approach to the U.S. infrastructure package that President Biden announced in March. Canada is very much focused on achieving an outcome that would allow suppliers on both sides of the border to participate and be subject to the same requirements as U.S. counterparts. We will always take a team Canada approach, working with Canadian businesses, exporters, manufacturers and industries, as we have done for the past five years and continue to do so.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Lastly, we know that COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on women around the world and has amplified existing inequalities. Today, as we look to rebuild, it is more important than ever to take concrete action to boost women's participation in the economy by placing them at the centre of our recovery efforts, including in the area of trade. This is critical not only for a speedy global recovery, but also to ensure that our supply chains will be more diverse, more competitive and more stable.

[English]

By putting women at the centre of our recoveries, we are ensuring that our supply chains will be more diverse, competitive and stable moving forward. Supporting the full and equal participation of women in trade is the right thing to do and the economically sound thing to do. Looking ahead to 2036, we could add up to \$12 trillion to the global economy if we advance women's economic empowerment and access in the economy. This is how we build back better.

I now have some questions.

During the minister's opening remarks, she spoke about diversity and the importance of making sure that diverse entrepreneurs and business owners are able to access global markets. I would like to add that in my riding I have a group of indigenous entrepreneurs, whom I recently met with. This is a group of people who have enormous ideas, and they were able to give me some very concrete recommendations.

We know that COVID-19 has impacted many businesses and entrepreneurs, and in particular indigenous entrepreneurs. We also know that indigenous economic development and entrepreneurship are critical aspects of self-determination. This group of indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses in my riding of Ottawa West—Nepean wants to know more about what the government is doing to help them not just start up, but also scale up and access export markets.

As to my question for my colleague, what is our government doing to support indigenous entrepreneurs to succeed both at home and in global markets?

● (2145)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, I understand there is a ruling of the House that a cap is permitted as long as it is removed before a member takes the opportunity to speak. Therefore, I will remove my cap, but I understand the Montreal Canadiens won the series just a few moments ago.

Business of Supply

I would like to thank my hon. colleague, the parliamentary secretary, for raising the issue of supporting indigenous entrepreneurs.

I would like to also mention that today was a historic day for supporting marginalized communities and communities that face systemic racism. Today, we announced that loans were now open for the Black entrepreneurs program, an announcement that was made by our Prime Minister and the Minister of Small Business.

With respect to indigenous entrepreneurs as well, there is a lot of good news. We have been supporting indigenous entrepreneurs for many years now. About \$420 million has been invested for indigenous businesses in particular and budget 2021 committed an additional \$42 million to expand that program as well as \$22 million toward indigenous women entrepreneurship in particular.

We are committed to supporting the fabulous and very interesting indigenous businesses across the country. We continue to diversify to ensure they are able to export right across the globe.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Madam Chair, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for mentioning women entrepreneurs and Black entrepreneurs, including that very important announcement today, which will make a significant difference.

Changing tracks a bit, I would like to ask another question about the benefits of trade. Our government is committed to creating the most favourable conditions for Canadian businesses to compete and succeed internationally. FTAs between Canada and our trading partners create new opportunities for Canadian businesses. Canada's prosperity hinges on modern trade rules, which open markets for our goods, services and investment.

Could the parliamentary secretary please tell us more about how Canada's 14 FTAs are benefiting Canadian businesses, exporters and workers?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Chair, the Minister of Small Business just a few moments ago, in answer to another colleague's question, mentioned that Canada was a trading nation, and that is so true. Nearly two-thirds of our economy and millions upon millions of Canadian jobs depend on international trade and investment. That is one of the reasons why Canada in fact took a leadership role on the international stage to ensure the free flow of goods worldwide and to ensure we would not fall into protectionist tendencies at a time of international crisis.

It is important we continue to prepare for a strong economic recovery through trade in Canada. We are in fact the only country in the G7 with free trade agreements with all other G7 nations. Our task as a government right now is to ensure that all our businesses are taking advantage of the international trade agreements we do have. We already know that one-in-six jobs in Canada is supported by exports. We want to increase that number even further and also increase the number of companies in Canada exporting abroad, which is why—

The Deputy Chair: There is just enough time for a brief question from the parliamentary secretary. There are 40 seconds left.

• (2150)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Madam Chair, in 40 seconds, could the parliamentary secretary talk about how we are ensuring a green economic recovery in our international trade?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. parliamentary secretary has 30 seconds left.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Chair, our green economic recovery requires a lot more than 30 seconds to discuss.

However, the most recent climate summit with our counterparts in the Biden administration was extremely successful. We are on track for a very strong, robust economic recovery that will be based on green technologies and ensure that we fight climate change.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Madam Chair, I would like to join the parliamentary secretary in celebrating the Montreal Canadiens' great win tonight, after they beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 3-1. This means the Habs get to continue their playoff run, and we are thrilled about that.

Unfortunately, the Minister of Foreign Affairs had very little time to complete his answer in our previous exchange on the situation in Taiwan. I would like to continue on this topic. Taiwan is currently experiencing a sharp rise in the number of COVID-19 cases, although the island had been faring relatively well in the pandemic until now.

However, Taiwan cannot negotiate with pharmaceutical companies like Pfizer, because China wants to force the Taiwanese government to go through Beijing for any requests, in order to pressure Tsai Ing-wen's nationalist government.

Is Canada planning to ship any vaccine doses directly to Taiwan, bypassing Beijing?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Chair, to answer the question, I would say that Canada is currently assessing what it will do with its surplus vaccines when the time comes.

As the Prime Minister has said, that is something we want to do to help other countries that do not have the means to get vaccines. That policy is being developed right now, as is our important role in COVAX.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, during the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development's study of the vulnerabilities created and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, several witnesses expressed concerns about the detention of several Canadian nationals, including children, in refugee camps in northern Syria.

Canada is one of the 57 countries on the list of shame for failing to repatriate its nationals trapped in these camps. Canada boasts on the international scene about being a staunch advocate for human rights. What is it doing about the rights of the children arbitrarily detained in these camps?

Business of Supply

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, we are aware of Canadian citizens are being detained by Kurdish authorities in northeast Syria. We are particularly concerned with cases of Canadian children in Syria. Canadian consular officials are actively engaged with Syrian Kurdish authorities to seek information about these Canadians.

I would like to clarify that it is a Criminal Code offence to travel abroad to engage in terrorist activity. Our government takes with the utmost seriousness the threat posed by travelling extremists and returnees of Daesh.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, is the minister telling us that the Canadian government is making children pay for crimes potentially committed by their parents? Given that these individuals have not been fairly and impartially tried, what is going on?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, what I want to tell my colleague from Montarville is that those children belong to families who are responsible for them. They cannot be separated from their families.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, I am a bit disturbed by the minister's answers because he is telling us that the rights of Canadians are being violated because of their possible involvement in criminal activities.

Under Canadian law, they must go through due process in a court of law, so what is the Canadian government waiting for? When will it bring these people back to Canada, bring them before the court to be judged and sentenced, if necessary, and perhaps make them participate in a deradicalization program?

• (2155)

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I want to very clearly state once again that it is a Criminal Code offence to travel abroad to engage in terrorist activity and that our government takes with the utmost seriousness the threats posed by travelling extremists and returnees of Daesh.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, the minister can repeat the answer as often as he likes, but he needs to listen to the questions I am asking him. Since he clearly does not want to answer that question, I will move on to another topic, that of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I think that, like us, peace-loving Palestinians and Israelis are fed up with empty words and want action. Without giving away any caucus secrets, we know that the current minister's predecessor was asked to play the role of mediator, even before the most recent clashes occurred.

What is happening with that? What role is Canada being called upon to play and is it prepared to play that role to bring the parties together so that lasting peace can be achieved in the region?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, Canada is certainly willing to play a role. It is something we can do as a country that is well respected by other countries. I have contacted my counterparts in Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the United States and the Palestinian Authority to let them know this.

Right now, we are concentrating on humanitarian aid, but, at some point, we will have to try to achieve reconciliation. Canada is

ready to play a role in reaching a solution where the two countries can live side by side.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, the minister knows full well that there is a strong movement calling for the boycott of products that come from Israel, a country with which we have a signed free trade agreement.

In light of this, would it not be a good idea, at least as a first step, not to consider products manufactured in the occupied territories as products of Israel?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, to answer the question on the BDS movement, Canada is a steadfast ally and friend to the Palestinian people. However, let me be clear: We condemn BDS.

Canada remains deeply concerned about efforts to isolate Israel internationally. Parliament made its concern about BDS clear in February 2016, when the House voted in favour of a motion to reject this movement.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, once again, I could not agree more with the minister, but the question was more about products manufactured in the occupied territories and considered to be Israeli products. My question was about that, but, once again, the minister has refused to answer it.

Regarding the diversion of a commercial airliner to Belarus, is the minister considering taking other sanctions against Belarus, as many European countries are? If so, which ones?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for the question.

We have imposed sanctions on Belarus and we are in the process of considering other sanctions over the act that was just committed with the Ryanair flight and the capture of the Belarusian journalist.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, what action does the government plan to take before the 2022 Olympic Games to address the Uighur genocide considering the majority of the House voted to denounce this genocide in China, and put pressure on the Chinese government to end this type of genocidal behaviour?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, we are taking the accusations of genocide very seriously and Canada is gravely concerned by the reports we have obtained on the situation in Xinjiang.

We have also been very clear that China must provide access to the Xinjiang region to a group of experts to examine the situation and we have reaffirmed that at the G7.

• (2200)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, what does the government plan to do about the situation in Tigray where there have been imprisonments, abuses and executions of civilians since November 2020, considering that Washington has recently taken measures against certain Eritrean and Ethiopian actors accused of fuelling the conflict?

Business of Supply

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, our Prime Minister has spoken to his counterpart, I have spoken to my counterpart, and the Minister of International Development has spoken to her counterpart. We clearly stated that Ethiopia must first tell the Eritrean forces to leave the Tigray region and provide access to the humanitarian aid that the citizens of Tigray—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Montarville.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, an Ontario court ruled that the destruction of Ukraine International Airlines flight 752 by Iran was an act of international terrorism.

Does the government agree, and will it hold Iran accountable for this terrorist act?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, we have certainly taken note of the fact that the Ontario Superior Court declared it an intentional act.

At this time, we are committed to working with the other four countries that suffered a loss of human life to negotiate compensation for the victims' families with Iran. That process will begin soon.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, Canada's WHO funding is increasing from \$18 million in 2020-21 to \$20 million in 2021-22.

Given that the European Union recently asked Canada to contribute more, is that amount enough?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Chair, we increased our contribution to the WHO this past year.

I announced more than \$100 million to address the COVID-19 crisis. We are stepping up to address the COVID-19 crisis. That is very important.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, the Government of Canada is often inconsistent in its approach to international trade, in particular with respect to awarding contracts or export permits. The government's approach makes it seem as though there is a two-tier process that often puts Quebec companies at a disadvantage. This was the case with Pratt & Whitney Canada, for example, which has been waiting for permits to export aircraft engines to China for two years.

Why has the Government of Canada not yet issued these permits?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his question.

I will get back to my colleague on this very specific question regarding the Pratt & Whitney engines to be exported to China.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, how does the Government of Canada interpret today's allegations that the U.S. spied on leaders of our European allies?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I need some more details. I did not fully understand his question.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, it was today's top news story. The United States, potentially with the help of Denmark, al-

legedly spied on the communications of leaders of our European allies.

How does Canada interpret this rather worrisome news?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I will have to get more information on this matter before I can respond.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, I would like to get back to Nathalie Morin.

The minister said that Ms. Morin's consular file is still open.

Is the minister aware that the Saudi government has apparently issued a travel ban for Ms. Morin and her children?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, we are very aware of Ms. Morin's situation, because we are in contact, and consular officials are closely monitoring this case. They are prepared to provide consular assistance if Ms. Morin requires it. We are following this file closely.

● (2205)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Chair, I would like to come back to the matter of the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement.

Is the minister willing to consider products made in the occupied territories as not being Israeli products?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I will have to get back to my colleague on that matter.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Chair, what a pleasure it is to be able to address the House. I found it very interesting listening to my colleagues, in particular the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade and of course the Minister of International Development. Listening to the ministers and knowing the background and passion they have for our country and the world, one cannot help but feel good knowing Canada is such a wonderful country to be in. We are a country that truly cares about what is happening around the world.

I want to address a couple of areas, with a special focus on trade.

Before I do that, when I was growing up a number of years back I used to watch hockey and was a Habs fan. We did not have the Winnipeg Jets back then. It was quite nice to see the Habs win this evening, which has already been referenced. The nicer thing is they are coming to my home city of Winnipeg where they will be playing my favourite team, the Winnipeg Jets. I will be rooting on whichever team wins that series for the Stanley Cup. I know Canadians from coast to coast to coast love hockey, and whatever team goes from Canada, rest assured Canadians will be behind the team saying "go team go".

I started off by talking about foreign affairs. A number of years back, I was in the Philippines in a community known as Cebu, which is a very large city in the southern part of the Philippines. I was at the Canadian consular services office there, and on the wall, I saw a picture of an astronaut. That astronaut was in fact the first astronaut in space, the current Minister of Foreign Affairs. I mention that because earlier this evening someone made reference to the Minister of Foreign Affairs as maybe not having as much experience as he would have liked to have seen.

I have grown an immense amount of respect for the minister's understanding and appreciation of what is taking place around the world. I am very proud of the fact he has taken the time, as other ministers of foreign affairs have, to talk to me personally about areas of interest I have, whether it is India, and in particular the Punjab, or the Philippines and different related issues.

I understand and appreciate the diplomacy necessary when we talk about things like the Middle East, China or Iran. It is not an easy file to have, but I am very grateful to know my friend is in that position, because he excels. I feel very comfortable knowing Canada is in such a great position today.

The Prime Minister often talks about Canada's diversity being our strength. When I think of the world, I think of it in terms of Canada's diversity. We have people in Canada with ancestors from around the world, so when something happens in a country outside Canada, we have a group of people who are genuinely concerned and want to hear from the government. All in all, the government does a fantastic job in appreciating that fact.

I know for many Canadians, in particular immigrants, who have adopted Canada as their home that their home country, their country of birth, always remains in their hearts to a certain degree, and who can blame them? I have been blessed to being affiliated, as a parliamentarian for over 30 years, with a lot of good people.

● (2210)

These are people who I would classify as part of my inner circle and my group of friends of Filipino heritage, Punjabi-speaking heritage or Indo-Canadian heritage. Those are two communities that I am very proud of and very proud to represent, so I know, when things take place in countries like that or Ukraine or others, that I take the time to listen and to talk and share my thoughts. Even though Canada is a country of 37.5 million people, we carry a tremendous amount of clout around the world, and I believe that is something we all need to take very seriously, as I know that the current Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of International Trade and the Minister of International Development collectively do on our behalf, day in and day out.

Shortly after the 2015 election, there were a couple of things that really came to the forefront. One is that we are a government that genuinely cares and wants to see the middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it expanded and to be taken care. We were committed to working as hard as possible, and that is the reason we saw things like the Ukraine trade deal ratified as quickly as it was. Months after we were elected, it was signed off. It was the same with the CETA. What about the agreement in regard to the United States, Mexico and Canada, the Pacific agreement or legislation in regard to the World Trade Organization?

Business of Supply

As a caucus, we have collectively recognized the true value of trade. Canada is a trading nation, a nation that is diverse and dependent on trade. For us to grow and prosper into the future, we need to keep focused on what is happening in the world around us, to come up with those progressive trade ideas and agreements, and to keep the diplomats talking, trying to fix where we can fix and trying to protect Canadian interests, wherever they might be in the world. Trade was important during the COVID-19 pandemic. That is why we saw a government take such a proactive approach to supporting small businesses.

One of my former bosses, the former government house leader, would say that small businesses are the backbone of our economy. We had to make sure that we supported small businesses, because many of those small businesses today are going to be major exporters in the future. That is why we had to develop programs to not only protect the individual Canadians by putting disposable income into their pockets, but we had to demonstrate that we could be in a better position to be able to, as the Prime Minister and ministers often say, build back better.

That is why we put in the investments that we did. That is why we have a minister responsible today for small businesses, who is being so proactive, and for international trade. Members should look at the agreement that was just achieved, and I know I speak on behalf of all my colleagues in regard to the United Kingdom agreement and the transitional period with which we have bought some time so that we can finalize something and so that we can continue to protect the interests of Canadian workers and Canada's economy and social fabric that we all love so dearly.

I think the Chair is already telling me that my time is expired, but I do have a question. Can I go ahead with the question, Madam Chair?

● (2215)

The Deputy Chair: The member has five minutes for questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Chair, I was talking about trade. I would like to ask a question of the parliamentary secretary, who I know is a Montreal Habs fan. For the next few days, we might be off side a bit as I am cheering for Winnipeg.

We know that trade is very important. It is one of the ways we can support Canada's middle class and those good quality jobs. I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could provide her thoughts as to why it was so important we continued to protect businesses and be there in a real and tangible way for trade in Canada.

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am so pleased to have the opportunity to get at the heart of what the hon. colleague was talking about and the agreements we have negotiated across the world.

Business of Supply

It is more than just the numbers that we talk about and how our trade agreements are providing access to 1.5 billion customers in the global marketplace. It is more than the fact that we are seeing more trade flow, even during this pandemic. It is about who trades. We are building back better and that means helping our small and medium-sized businesses, our women entrepreneurs, our Black business owners, indigenous entrepreneurs and young entrepreneurs.

We have, throughout this pandemic, pivoted—

The Deputy Chair: Unless the hon. parliamentary secretary who asked the question wants the hon. minister to continue, there will be another question right now.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Chair, I would ask the minister to finish her thoughts.

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I am so proud of Canada's trade agreements which are inclusive, helping more people trade. In these agreements, we have built out those inclusive provisions so we are providing that kind of framework for our small and medium-sized businesses, women entrepreneurs, indigenous entrepreneurs and young entrepreneurs to grow and to scale up into those global markets.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Chair, there is one member of the House who has been in space. He, more than anyone else in the chamber, can realize just how small the world really is and the leadership potential that Canada can play in its development.

I wonder if the minister or his parliamentary secretary could provide some thoughts in regard to Canada's leadership role.

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am going to assume that question was for me. Certainly one of the very special experiences of going into space is that we do see our whole planet. In fact, we can go around it in 90 minutes. It is a small planet and we all live together, all seven and three-quarter billion of us and about 200 countries. It makes us think a lot about a couple of things in particular.

One is that we should try to find a way to get along because there is nowhere else for us to go, especially when we look at the dark space that surrounds our planet. The second thing is that we realize we are doing things to our planet, environmentally speaking, and we need to be very cognizant of that to ensure we do not ruin the planet for our children and grandchildren.

• (2220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Chair, when I think of Canada's role, I cannot help but think about international relations and development. I wonder if we can get some thoughts on how important it is that Canada continue to play that role of supporting other countries around the world, so we can make a difference.

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Chair, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates why it is so important for a country like Canada to be engaged on the world stage. We know that until everyone is safe from COVID-19, no one is, so that is why we have stepped up so much over the past year and will continue to do so.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be sharing my time with the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

My questions are for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

President Biden, in his made-in-America executive order on January 25, made a clear statement about the priority and direction that the U.S. would take in terms of ensuring the future is made in America and by all of America's workers.

Has the minister gained commitment from the United States that Canadian companies will be able to bid directly on all aspects of the U.S. \$2 trillion federal infrastructure plan?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Chair, this is an area of extreme importance to Canada's economy. Our supply chain is inextricably connected to the United States. We will work with the United States to ensure there is no impact on Canada's exports.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Chair, could the minister let us know whether she has been successful in gaining a commitment that Canada will not be excluded from the federal infrastructure plan of the United States?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, I just want to clarify that Canada is exempt from buy America requirements due to the WTO agreement on general procurement. If there is an effort to expand or introduce new domestic content requirements under buy America, we will absolutely ensure that this does not affect Canadian supply chains.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Chair, we have heard that Canada's approach to the made-in-America executive order is to educate all aspects of the political and industry sectors in the U.S. on Canada's integrated approach to ensure they are aware of any unintended consequences. Speaking candidly, it could be viewed as naive for us to think that President Biden and our U.S. neighbours have not made themselves aware of all the consequences, yet decided to pursue a made-in-America action anyway.

Canada's approach is not working. The U.S. has cancelled Keystone XL. We have lost auto jobs. We are not making progress on softwood lumber. The steel and aluminum manufacturing industry in Canada has lost jobs as they have moved to the U.S.

Could the minister tell us how the policies and Canada's approach will be changing so that we receive a different result?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, the result of the last five years and the relationship despite challenges has come out well for Canadians, for Canadian steel and aluminum, and for our workers. Canada and the U.S. will benefit from our interconnected supply chains. We will make this case every single time. We will take a team Canada approach, working with exporters and workers, so that we are growing jobs on both sides of our border.

Business of Supply

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Chair, that has not been the case. The approach is not working.

The unilateral revoking of the Enbridge Line 5 easement remains unresolved, threatening the delivery of 540,000 barrels a day of petroleum products from Alberta and Saskatchewan that supply over 53% of Ontario's crude oil and 66% of Quebec's. This line is critical.

Has the Minister of Foreign Affairs met with the governor of Michigan?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Chair, I have not met with Governor Whitmer. However, our excellent Ambassador Kirsten Hillman in Washington has had numerous conversations with her. We have a very active advocacy program under way to speak to people in the states of Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

• (2225)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Chair, could the minister tell us when he will be meeting with the Governor of Michigan?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, I do not have any plans to meet with the governor of Michigan at this time.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Chair, this is critical. If the governor of Michigan is successful in shutting down Line 5, could the minister provide us with the plan that ensures the 540,000 barrels will be delivered by other means?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, we have been very active to try to ensure this pipeline does not close down. Ultimately, we would like Enbridge and the State of Michigan to resolve their issue, but we have also transmitted an amicus brief to the courts so they are aware—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Chair, the closure of the Canada-U.S. border has had a drastic impact on Canada-U.S. trade. Could the minister provide us with the value of the trade that has been lost due to the border closure over the last 14 months?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Chair, essential goods and services continue to flow between the borders, ensuring that food remains in our grocery stores and that critical supplies get into Canada, including medicines and medical supplies. We have done this in an effort to ensure we are keeping Canadians healthy and safe, but essential goods and—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Chair, perhaps the minister could table the value of the lost U.S.-Canada trade.

The U.S. is rapidly opening its economy and has a plan to do so. What conditions must be in place for the Canada-U.S. border to reopen?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, Canada is evaluating on a real time basis when to open our border. We have had an open border with respect to the essential traffic of important goods between our two countries, but it is the Public Health Agency of Canada that

will make the decision as to how fast and when we open our border again.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Chair, perhaps when that plan is available, the minister could table the conditions under which the border must reopen.

Hon. Marc Garneau: Madam Chair, as we make decisions about reopening the border progressively, we will make that information public.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Chair, my questions will be for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

We know that trade relations with our neighbours to the south have not been great since the Liberal government took office in 2015. Although the Liberals just signed a new free trade agreement with the U.S., the Americans are already threatening several important sectors of our economy.

With the rising price of softwood lumber in Canada, when is the Liberal government going to negotiate a deal to resolve the softwood lumber crisis, which is affecting Canadian businesses and families?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we know that the current duties imposed on softwood lumber are both unfair and unwarranted, and they are causing harm to Canadian communities and certainly including those in the U.S. as well home builders and consumers. We have consistently shared with the United States that we would be ready to enter into a dialogue around a negotiated settlement.

• (2230)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel: Mr. Chair, trade representatives told the U.S. Senate that they wanted to settle the softwood lumber issue, but Canada was not interested.

Is that true or false?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, I have shared and reiterated Canada's position to the U.S. trade representative as well as the commerce secretary that a negotiated agreement is possible and it is in the best interests of both countries.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel: Mr. Chair, it is an open secret that some Canadian companies do not want the issue of softwood lumber prices to be resolved because their multinationals operate on both sides of the border.

Is the government supporting Canadians dealing with skyrocketing prices and our forestry SMEs and co-operatives, or is it supporting the multinationals that are getting to call the shots in the current situation?

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, as the minister responsible for both small business and international trade, I can assure the member that standing up for small businesses is at the very core of what I do. Standing up for Canada's forestry sector and the hundreds of thousands of jobs that it employs across the country is what we do.

We will vigorously defend their interests and, as I have reiterated to the United States, a negotiated agreement is indeed in the best interest of both countries.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel: Mr. Chair, the Biden administration has announced that it intends to challenge Canada's allocation of dairy tariff-rate quotas through the CUSMA dispute settlement mechanism.

The United States says that Canada's trade policies prevent U.S. dairy producers from taking full advantage of CUSMA. Canadian exporters, importers and farmers cannot afford any more of the Liberal failures in managing Canada-U.S. trade relations that they have witnessed over the past five years.

What does the government plan on doing to protect our dairy producers?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, I would first start with reminding my hon. colleague that it is our government that protected the supply-managed sector. We are disappointed that the U.S. has requested a dispute panel, but we are confident in the administration of dairy TRQs and that they are in full compliance with the commitments under CUSMA.

Our government will continue to stand up for Canada's dairy industry, our farmers and our workers, and we will continue to protect and defend our supply management system.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel: Mr. Chair, Canada is in this situation because the Liberal trade minister was unable to stand up for Canada's dairy producers at the bilateral meeting with her counterpart in early May.

Since this meeting, trade relations between Canada and the United States have only deteriorated, what with the announcement that the U.S. would be doubling softwood lumber tariffs and now this official dispute of Canada's dairy tariff-rate quotas.

When will the Liberal government provide a schedule for compensating dairy producers for concessions made under CUSMA?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, I want to assure the hon. member that our government will always stand up for Canada's dairy industry, our farmers and our workers.

Let me also share with the member that in my meeting with the U.S. trade representative recently, we talked about North American competitiveness. We talked about the new NAFTA and how it will help to create jobs in both of our countries, as well as in Mexico. We talked about economic recovery and how we were going to deal

with the very important issues of climate, labour and making trade inclusive so that small and medium-sized businesses will benefit from this very important agreement.

● (2235)

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Chair, in today's uncertain global landscape, it is essential to have an effective, rules-based international system that promotes and protects the interest and prosperity of all Canadians. The current system is based on a respect for international law and the territorial integrity of the states, and guided by the fundamental premise that no country can accomplish alone what we can accomplish together.

This system has contributed to the relative peace and steadily expanding prosperity of the last 75 years. It has facilitated massive trade growth. It has helped advance collective security by reducing the use of hard power between states, instituting rules for the use of force and supporting peaceful settlements of disputes. It has provided an expanding framework to foster the conditions for open markets, the rule of law and democratic governance. It has allowed the world to manage issues of common interest from fishing rights to air transport, extradition, postal services, telecom regulations, and the creation of legal frameworks for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Through the decades, this system has largely proven resilient in the face of interstate tensions. However, the system has been stressed by several factors in recent years, amplified during the pandemic, such as increased geopolitical competition. Some states increasingly disregard principles and institutions they find inconvenient; notably, those related to human rights, the rule of law and good governance. Protectionism has grown alongside isolationist domestic politics. Financial, organizational and leadership challenges affect the ability of some multilateral entities to fulfill their mandates effectively. At the same time, we face acute global challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation and forced migration that cannot be solved by countries acting alone.

In the face of these pressures, action is required, not just to protect the current system, but also to strengthen and reform it to address the challenges that will shape our future. From the development of the Bretton Woods institutions, NATO and the UN, to more recent multilateral action to ban land mines, prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers, or to fight climate change, Canada has a long history of working with partners to develop and leverage rules-based multilateral mechanisms to address global challenges. Today we must reach out and rally as many partners as possible, to future-proof the system, so that it can address emerging issues and adapt to serve the interests of all states and all people.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for collective responses to complex global challenges, from the provision of vaccines to the entire global population, to the technological and economic transformations needed to address climate change. More broadly, Canada has a long and proud tradition of constructive involvement in the United Nations. This is why we co-chaired, in January, the UN peacebuilding fund replenishment conference and why we are working with partners to advance the UN reform agenda for making the UN a more efficient, transparent and accountable organization that remains an effective platform for advancing Canadian interests.

At the same time, Canada is a respected voice across other institutions and forums, many of which we were instrumental in developing, including NATO, the G7, the G20, la Francophonie, the Commonwealth, APEC and the Organization of American States, among others. Through all of these settings, Canada prioritizes the advancement and protection of human rights, and the push for gender equality. However, even as we work to revitalize international institutions, we may also need to create new collaborative forums where old ones no longer meet the challenge. For example, Canada is acting as co-chair of the Media Freedom Coalition and co-founded the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence, which convenes experts from science, industry and civil society, dedicated to the responsible development and use of artificial intelligence, grounded in human rights, inclusion, diversity, innovation and economic growth.

Today we have both the opportunity and the responsibility to build on our past efforts. Seventy-three years ago, countries around the world came together to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which outlines the fundamental rights and freedoms to which we are all entitled.

● (2240)

While much progress on human rights has been achieved since 1948, events of 2020 reminded us that there is still a long way to go. The multilateral human rights system remains a critical tool in pursuing our common goal of ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights for all. For Canada, it is one of the most important ways to engage in advancing human rights around the world. That is why Canada continues to actively engage in the UN human rights system, including through mechanisms such as the universal periodic review, where member states receive peer feedback on their human rights records every four years.

Canada is also proud to engage at forums like the UN General Assembly's third committee and the Human Rights Council, where we have led resolutions on ending child, early and forced marriage; ending violence against women and girls; and supporting human rights in Iran. Sadly, Canada and like-minded countries are continuing to witness the rising trend of anti-rights and gender equality backlash in these settings, but that only further underscores the need to progress and sustain dialogue.

In the face of this backlash and the challenges posed by COVID-19 around the world, including in Canada, human rights defenders, members of the media, volunteers, civic leaders, indigenous representatives and more are fighting for more inclusive and just societies. Many are doing so in the midst of shrinking civic

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space, including Internet shutdowns and other threats to freedom of expression.

Too many, especially too many women human rights defenders, are risking the safety of themselves and their families through the course of their work. Canada is continuing to listen to the experiences of these brave individuals and is investing in initiatives such as "Voices at Risk: Canada's Guidelines on Supporting Human Rights Defenders", a publicly accessible resource meant for use by Canadian officials at home and abroad.

Around the world, Canada takes action with a clear understanding of its national interest and a commitment to stand firm in the defence of our most cherished values and principles. This requires that we work to advance gender equality through all of our international actions, both bilaterally and multilaterally. The rules-based system has been essential for promoting and supporting gender equality. Multilateral co-operation and the advancement of gender equality are closely linked.

The structures, goals, operations and resources of both regional and global institutions have a significant influence over how Canada and the world are able to take action in support of gender equality and human rights in a time of profound change, complex challenges and considerable opportunities. Canada will continue to play a constructive role in shaping the evolving global system for the benefit and prosperity of all Canadians.

I have a number of questions for the minister.

The pandemic knows no borders. The collaboration between countries during this pandemic illustrated the importance of diplomacy and cross-border co-operation. From PPE to vaccines to addressing various human rights crises, international cross collaboration has continued and deepened since 2020. The pandemic also illustrated the need to maintain and promote a rules-based international order. Throughout the crisis, our government has been engaging on the international stage, and ministers have regularly engaged with their counterparts around the world.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs recently resumed in-person diplomacy, while continuing to abide by all health and safety measures, and has attended the G7 and Arctic Council meetings. Could the minister tell us about Canada's priority at the Arctic Council meeting and what outcomes came out of the meeting? Also, could the minister tell us about his meetings with his counterparts from the United States and Russia?

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● (2245)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, yes, I have just returned from the Arctic Council. The eight countries of the Arctic Council are really seized with the challenges of what is happening in the north, where climate change is causing the environment to change at an accelerated pace. It is, in fact, three times faster than the rest of the world. That has implications for transportation, biodiversity and the lives of the four million people who live around the Arctic regions of this country.

We reaffirmed that those were the priorities as we go forward. Sustainable development, understanding what is happening to the environment and focusing on the people who live in those regions, and who have been there for millennia, are the driving factors that have guided us in the past 25 years.

I had a bilateral meeting with Secretary Blinken, and among other things, we talked about our common purpose with respect to the Arctic region, the United States being one of the countries. I also spoke to my counterpart from Russia because Russia is taking over the chairmanship of the Arctic Council for the next two years. I am glad to report that, even though we have big differences of opinion on many subjects with Russia, it does have a strategic vision that aligns with the other seven members with respect to the next two years.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Chair, our government has spoken against the negative pattern of Russia's irresponsible and destabilizing behaviour, as well as its blatant disregard for human rights at home and abroad. Russia continues to repress any opposition voices. This includes Alexei Navalny and his supporters, who have been jailed, criminally prosecuted and continuously intimidated. Navalny himself recently ended his hunger strike but continues to be detained in jail, and the conditions of his detention continue to be the topic of international scrutiny.

Additionally, our government has continually expressed its deep concern about the large, ongoing buildup of Russian military forces on Ukraine's borders and the illegally annexed Crimea. These large-scale troop movements, without prior notification, represent threatening and destabilizing activities. Canada has been supportive of Ukraine's posture of restraint.

Can the minister tell us what Canada is doing to address Russia's destabilizing behaviour? What can the minister tell us Canada is doing to support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I had a very frank discussion with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov about two issues that have been very much in the news these days and for which Canada has imposed sanctions on Russia. These are its troop buildup around Ukraine, the fact that it illegally annexed Crimea in 2014 and has been very active in the Donbass on the eastern frontier of Ukraine, as well as its human rights record, especially with respect to Alexei Navalny, whom it first attempted to poison and is currently detaining. We had a very blunt conversation about that.

Canada is a strong ally of Ukraine. We have put approximately \$800 million into Ukraine since 2014. Operation Unifier is involved with training Ukrainian troops, and we have assured Ukraine of our steadfast support against the illegal annexation and aggressive behaviour against it.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Chair, as a follow-up to that question, I was hoping the minister could elaborate on this: What type of sanctions has the Government of Canada imposed upon Russia at this point?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, in total, Canada has currently 440-odd sanctions either in accordance with the Magnitsky sanctions or, as these are against individuals or entities, under the Special Economic Measures Act or the United Nations Act. These are sanctions against individuals and entities in Russia both in relation to what it has done in Ukraine as well as its human rights record, especially with respect to Alexei Navalny.

● (2250)

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Chair, could the minister quickly update the House on what other countries or foreign nationals we have imposed Magnitsky sanctions on?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, we have imposed sanctions, and we do this judiciously against a number of countries, whether Belarus recently because of the fraudulent elections last year and the forced Ryanair landing there, or Iran because of its human rights record and sponsorship of terrorist organizations. There are some sanctions against the Democratic Republic of North Korea. I am going by memory here, but we have some in a number of other countries. I am not going to venture any others forth at this point because my memory is not that good.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, I am going to start by asking some questions that I do not think will surprise the minister.

Canada's official development assistance continues to be well below the international standard. Canada currently invests approximately 30¢ for every \$100 in gross national income. Under the Harper government, aid levels were almost exactly the same as the level we are at now.

Of course, I am very curious about what happened to the Prime Minister's promise that Canada was back. Does the minister have a plan to increase aid levels to get to the 0.7% that Canada has promised for decades, or will we continue to see a Liberal government that fails to meet these promises, just as we saw the Conservative government do?

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Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Chair, as my colleague knows, Canada's ODA/GNI ratio is currently 0.31%, which is the highest it has been since 2012. In fact, on a volume basis it is higher than it has ever been. That includes a 2018 commitment to increase our ODA by \$2 billion, which is going through, as well as the additional \$1.7 billion we raised specifically for the COVID-19 pandemic over the past year.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, can the minister tell me why Canadian organizations, particularly small and medium-sized organizations, those that are run by Canadians located in communities across our country, get such a small proportion of the aid envelope? What is the plan to increase that proportion?

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for her advocacy. I know she has worked for a long time in this sector.

I would note that we have actually increased the proportion of aid going to organizations based in Canada. When we came into office, it was just over \$600 million a year. It is now over \$970 million a year. We have also created a \$100-million window for small and medium-sized Canadian-based organizations that work in international development. The first window has approved 40 of these, and there is another window that is currently seeking proposals. We will continue to work with our wonderful international—

The Chair: We will go back to the hon. member.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, in 2020, the government responded to the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian crisis by allocating around \$1.4 billion toward the global COVID-19 response. This year, the United Nations is warning of “famines of biblical proportions” in 20 countries, affecting 20 million people. Against this backdrop, budget 2021 foresees only \$375 million of additional funding.

Does the minister have reason to believe the pandemic is over, or has Canada decided not to answer global humanitarian calls?

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Chair, of course we have not. The \$1.7 billion that we provided and mobilized over the course of the past year is continuing to respond right now. In fact, in India, UNICEF provided 1,400 oxygen cylinders from that money that Canada helped provide over the course of the past year.

The \$375 million is in addition to that, and this means that Canada is now one of only two countries to pay their fair share to the ACT-Accelerator. Canada remains committed, and we will continue to respond effectively and appropriately to the global response.

• (2255)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, the minister launched the “together for learning” campaign and has committed to refugee education, yet neither of these commitments was mentioned in budget 2021. Are there plans to back these development commitments with financial resources?

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Chair, as the member knows, we launched a \$40-million call for proposals alongside the launch of the “together for learning” campaign. We are doing significant advocacy work around the world to work with partner countries to ensure that refugees in their borders have access to education, and we

will continue to do this work. We are a strong supporter of education—

The Chair: The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, I am now going to ask some questions of the Minister of International Trade.

I have spent many years working to ensure that Canadian companies working abroad uphold Canadian values of fairness and justice. Of course, I was understandably excited when the government established the CORE ombudsperson. However, I was also understandably devastated when we learned that once again the Liberal government had betrayed not just Canadians' trust, but the trust of people around the world whose lives and livelihoods are threatened by Canadian companies.

I am certain the minister is aware that the office currently does not have the power to compel documents and testimony from Canadian companies, despite the fact that the government made a promise to the contrary.

It has been three and a half years since the government announced the CORE ombudsperson role. How many cases has the CORE ombudsperson resolved?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for her advocacy on this issue.

We are very proud to have appointed the first-ever Canadian ombudsperson for responsible enterprise. In budget in 2021, we quadrupled the CORE's annual funding going forward. As she has testified at committee, she has the tools and resources necessary to ensure that companies are upholding their high standards for responsible business.

We will continue to work with the CORE to support her in working with Canadian enterprises so they indeed are Canadian companies that bear high ethical standards operating in Canada as well as around the world.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, what is the CORE's annual budget?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, maybe I can find that and get it to the member in the next answer.

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Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, I would like to clarify that I know the answer to the question, but there are zero cases that the CORE has actually resolved. Since you announced the CORE three and a half years ago, there have been zero cases. Therefore, when you can share the amount that we have now paid for zero cases to be resolved, that would be great.

The Chair: I would ask the hon. member to direct her questions through the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, yes, I will endeavour to get the member that number.

It was very good that the ombudsperson was able to launch her inquiry line, and that was done very recently. Of course, during this pandemic, to get staffed up and put her operation in place was slightly delayed, but her work is up and running. We have full confidence in the work that—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, even Harper had a similar office in place that had no power to compel testimony or documents, called the National Contact Point.

How is the CORE position under this government different than under the Harper Conservatives?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, under the CORE, first, it is the first-ever ombudsperson and she does have the tools and resources to carry out her function. She is able to report independently. She is able to launch investigations independently. Upon her recommendation, we can withhold from companies a—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, is the minister aware that a witness testified when we did a study at the international human rights subcommittee? Is she aware that a witness who testified on the CORE's study has had her life threatened and has been placed in grave danger as a result of her testimony in the House of Commons?

• (2300)

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, that is absolutely unacceptable. Our government champions human rights and defends them at home and abroad. We expect Canadian companies operating anywhere in the world to be fulfilling their ethical, responsible business conduct and to stand up for human rights wherever they work. Being a Canadian company that bears the good reputation—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, does the minister feel that Canada has an obligation—

The Chair: We will just take a pause here for a moment. I will stop the clock momentarily.

I might suggest that the hon. minister may be able to see my image on her screen. I can give her a cue as to when we are at time so she can finish up her remarks. We will give that try.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona for her next question.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, does the minister feel that Canada has an obligation to protect and support witnesses who testify before parliamentarians?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, all witnesses who come before committees absolutely should feel free to provide the testimony as they do before our parliamentary committees.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, could the minister tell me how she proposes to protect this witness?

Hon. Mary Ng: Mr. Chair, that matter is appropriate for the committees. They are operated for parliamentarians, by parliamentarians, and that would be the appropriate place.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, in February 2020, the Liberal government announced that it would develop a coherent feminist foreign policy. Our global allies are increasingly moving toward a single approach consisting of interrelated and mutually reinforcing agendas of trade, international diplomacy, co-operation and peacekeeping. However, Canada has proven to be a wholly unreliable global partner, and we saw the results when we lost our bid for a UN Security Council seat.

Is there a political commitment within the government to outline a decisive and coherent foreign policy that combines all areas of trade, diplomacy, co-operation and peacekeeping? If so, when can we expect the consultations to begin?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, Canada is very proud that it has a foreign feminist policy. In fact, we will be delivering a white paper fairly shortly, after a great deal of consultation. We are one of the countries leading the world on feminist foreign policy. Sweden was the first and we were essentially the second. Now a number of other countries are also embarking on it, such as France, Mexico and Luxembourg.

We are very proud of what we have done, and I look forward to the release of the white paper shortly. Then I would be happy to take questions from my colleague.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, the ministry indeed triggered consultations for a white paper on feminist foreign policy, but it is only looking at diplomacy and international assistance components. Are there plans to commence a broader process on feminist foreign policy? If so, when can we expect this to happen?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, there are also examples in the area of peacekeeping, such as the Elsie initiative. We are a country that has an ambassador for women, peace and security. We are very proud of the multi-functional approach we are taking to foreign feminist policy.

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Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, an example of the incoherency of our foreign policy is when we provide humanitarian funds to Yemen and still sell arms to Saudi Arabia to use against the Yemeni people. In fact, Canada's foreign policy is so incoherent that Canada was condemned by the United Nations for contributing to grave human rights abuses.

Will the government stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I reject the premise of that question. We are providing humanitarian aid to Yemen, a very stricken area. We also have, separately from that, very strict requirements with respect to the export of arms. We are respecting that requirement as well.

• (2305)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, does the minister honestly believe that Canada will ever be considered for a Security Council seat and will ever be considered as a legitimate peacekeeper when it fuels conflict and war, as it is doing in the Yemeni conflict?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, again, I reject those comments. They are very inflammatory comments about fuelling a war and unrest. I totally reject them.

Canada is a member of the United Nations. Yes, perhaps sometime in the future we will have a seat on the Security Council, but we will continue to work within the United Nations' multilateral body.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, according to Human Rights Watch there are 47 Canadians detained in camps in northern Syria. Of those 47, 26 are children. They are innocent Canadian children. They are not responsible for what their parents have done and are being held in deplorable, abhorrent conditions. They have no access to clean water, they have barely enough food and there is no medical care.

They are Canadian citizens. They are children. Will the Liberal government take the necessary steps to repatriate these Canadian children, these Canadian citizens, as soon as possible?

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, let me be clear: Those children are with parents. Parents have custody of the children. If the parents do not want their children to be separated from them, that is something we need to respect.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, the Afghan peace talks are crumbling. There has been an increase in violence. Canada has, of course, contributed an awful lot to Afghanistan over the years. What is the government doing to ensure women and girls are protected and that their voices are included in the peace talks?

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Chair, this is a top priority for us in Canada. As my hon. colleague mentioned, Canada has contributed significantly to development in Afghanistan, making gender equality and the rights of women and girls a top priority over the last 20 years.

We are watching this situation closely, and we are certainly advocating at every opportunity that whatever a future Afghan government looks like, the rights of women and girls are included. We will stand up for them at every turn.

The Chair: Before we wrap up the committee of the whole, I want to extend my appreciation to all hon. members who participated this evening. It was sometimes a little clunky to do it in the hybrid virtual means, but members did exceedingly well, in my opinion.

It being 11:07 p.m., pursuant to an order made Friday, May 28, and Standing Order 81(4), all votes are deemed reported. The committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:07 p.m.)

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