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# House of Commons Debates

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**Volume 150 No. 071**  
Thursday, March 11, 2021

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 11, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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• (1005)

[*Translation*]

## PRIVILEGE

INTERPRETATION SERVICES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I would like to come back to the question raised on March 8, 2021, by the member for Salaberry—Suroît concerning the wearing of certain masks during House proceedings.

The issue that the member raised is an important one because it affects members' right to participate fully in sittings of the House.

[*English*]

Wearing masks is one of the many constraints related to the pandemic with which the House and its committees have had to deal this past year. The House is called on to reconcile everyone's efforts to follow public health guidelines with members' right to participate fully in proceedings while respecting our rules and practices.

The deliberations and recommendations of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs have provided a response to some of the concerns and eliminated obstacles that sometimes seemed unsurmountable. The same is true for the many discussions among House leaders and party whips that have allowed us to continue our work.

[*Translation*]

It is my understanding as well that discussions continued among the parties and that an agreement has been reached. In order to make the interpreters' work easier, members who want to wear a mask during their interventions in the House and in committee will have to use procedure masks. These will be made available in the lobbies. At any other time, members may wear any mask they prefer.

[*English*]

We have witnessed, this past year, the importance of co-operating, negotiating and compromising. They are essential to the proper functioning of our parliamentary system.

I thank the hon. members for their attention.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to thank the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît for having brought us to this point with the masks.

[*English*]

I also want to thank all members for the co-operation that has taken place. It really shows that Canadian democracy is working strongly and that people are working together. I am very proud to be a part of this chamber.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST CODE

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to section 15(3) of the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons, it is my duty to lay upon the table the list of all sponsored travel by members for the year 2020, with a supplement as provided by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

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[*English*]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

\* \* \*

### NATIONAL DAY OF OBSERVANCE FOR COVID-19

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in February last year, the coronavirus disease discovered in 2019 gave us a new word: COVID-19. However, even as COVID-19 took hold of our planet, even as this new word took over our lives, we found ourselves talking about other words too, about words that were not new at all: sacrifice and solidarity; compassion and community. When the pandemic hit last year, these words, words that have defined Canadians for generations, were suddenly given new meaning. It has been a tough year, a heartbreaking year, but it has been a year that we have faced together, and that is something we must never forget.

*Routine Proceedings*

On this National Day of Observance for COVID-19, we remember the people we have lost: grandparents and parents; brothers and sisters; friends and colleagues. Each one was loved. Each one was special.

[Translation]

The pandemic is officially one year old. March 11, 2020, will always be the dividing line between before and after. For families and loved ones, each death is also a dividing line between before and after. Today we remember those who lost their lives to COVID-19. They are no longer with us, but we will never forget them.

The great wars of the 20th century gave us an oft-repeated phrase, one that is just as apt for those we lost this year to the pandemic: Lest we forget.

[English]

A year ago, Canadians were asked to stay home and stay safe, yet even apart, or perhaps because we were apart, our communities became stronger and stronger. Businesses stepped up to produce PPE when we needed it most. Some went from making hockey masks to face shields. It does not get more Canadian than that. Students and teachers learned how to do school online, and kids did the dishes while they were doing their homework. Young people across the country stepped up to help their neighbours and to serve their communities. Essential workers made sure the shelves were still stocked with food. People cheered from balconies in solidarity with health care workers, the heroes of the pandemic.

Brave women and men in the armed forces answered the call of duty for indigenous communities and for the greatest generation, now in long-term care homes. They were there for our parents and grandparents, and through that service we saw clearly that for every senior in Canada we must do better, and I know we will.

● (1010)

[Translation]

Despite all that, there is hope on the horizon. The vaccine rollout is picking up speed. Millions of doses are coming. Now is not the time to let our guard down.

As people continue to do what needs to be done, I know they find it reassuring when they see all their leaders working together across party lines and levels of government.

We are going through an unprecedented crisis. We will need every Canadian's talent, know-how and ideas to write the next chapter together. We cannot rebuild a just economy for all if we are divided. We cannot make major social initiatives a reality if we refuse to listen to one another.

Over the past year, we have worked together to get through this, and this year, we will keep working together to rebuild.

[English]

Compassion, community, sacrifice and solidarity are where we find meaning in the depths of grief. They are our light through a dark time. Every Canadian we lost to this virus will be remembered. Every shift done by a front-line nurse and every mask made by a Canadian worker will not be forgotten. We are stronger together today, tomorrow and always.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today we recognize a sombre national day of observance for COVID-19, a virus that has caused a crisis of historic proportions here in Canada and around the world. More than 22,000 Canadians have died from COVID-19, hundreds of thousands have fallen ill and millions have lost jobs or have had their work severely cut back.

[Translation]

Some Canadians passed away after not seeing their families or loved ones for months. Many parents have struggled to help their kids with online learning at home.

Canadians must also deal with a number of side effects associated with the pandemic. Many workers are concerned about the mental health of their colleagues. Thousands of cancer surgeries have been postponed. Drug and alcohol abuse rates have also increased. Domestic violence has become the shadow pandemic of COVID-19.

[English]

In British Columbia, there have been 60% more deaths from the opioid epidemic than from COVID-19. Increasing rates of domestic violence have been the shadow pandemic this past year. Youth mental health issues, presenting as anxiety or eating disorders, are alarmingly on the rise.

The true cost of this pandemic on the lives and livelihoods of Canadians of all walks of life has been staggering, yet after a year, Canadians are still not sure when we can expect life to get back to normal again. We all want to know when we can go back to work regularly, when we can see our classmates in school like we used to and when everyone can expect their vaccinations.

[Translation]

The Conservatives want the government to succeed. Everything is linked to the vaccine rollout. Our nation and our economic recovery depend directly on it. We must do everything we can to get Canadians back to work in every sector and in every region of the country. Canadians need the government to take action, especially to stop the spread of new variants.

*Routine Proceedings*

● (1015)

*[English]*

Our front-line health care workers are exhausted. Nurses, PSWs, physicians and caregivers have put it all on the line for us this last year, and Canadians appreciate their efforts. Rebecca and I saw their hard work and dedication first-hand when our own family had an experience with COVID-19. We want to thank the dozens of health care workers at the Brewer Park assessment centre for working with us.

*[Translation]*

Thanks also to Josée Gauthier, our public health nurse.

*[English]*

Our front-line and essential workers deserve our thanks and praise. They also deserve our efforts to ensure that we can provide them with more support and certainty in the future. In the present, they deserve to know when they can expect their lives, which have been turned upside down perhaps more than any others, to return to normal. Small businesses that have been hanging on by a thread also deserve to know when main street can finally breathe a sigh of collective relief.

*[Translation]*

Canadians still do not know when they will get their first dose of vaccine. Meanwhile, our neighbours to the south will be able to begin their economic recovery, since more than 300 million Americans will be vaccinated by May.

*[English]*

We have worked together to help Canadians in this crisis, and while we have wanted to see more effective programs, we have still put the money and support out the door and worked on fixes after. Like many Canadians, we are frustrated by the slower pace of vaccines here than elsewhere, but we want the government to succeed for the health and well-being of Canadians so that we can get our lives back to normal and can address the unemployment, inequality and strain caused by the crisis.

We must also recommit, as Canadians, to ensure that our country is never again unprepared. We must learn the lessons, build capacity and ensure a swifter and more effective response in the future.

*[Translation]*

Today, as we see the effects COVID-19 has had on Canada, it is important to work together to improve our vaccination plan and our economic recovery.

*[English]*

Today, we pause, give thanks, remember, take a collective breath and redouble our efforts to beat COVID and get life back to normal. Let us gather up our true patriot love to ensure that Canada conquers COVID and emerges united and stronger than ever before.

*[Translation]*

Thank you.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, with the symbol of the white rose, which I brought with me here today, Quebec has chosen to also declare today a day of remembrance. In normal times we would expect the commemoration to be held once the crisis is over, but it has been going on for far too long now, and it is important to tell all those who lost a loved one that we are with them.

More than 10,000 people in Quebec and more than 20,000 in Canada have lost their lives to COVID-19. In Quebec, nearly 300,000 people contracted the virus. These are not just statistics, they are faces, people who are no longer with us.

Like my colleagues, I want to say that we owe a debt of gratitude to health care workers and all those who work in education and child care. Three days after March 8, I would like to note that these frontline jobs are often held by women.

My thoughts go out to the most vulnerable, those whom the pandemic has made even more vulnerable, and to the people living in isolation, poverty and anxiety who are suffering even more and have become more fragile because of this disease.

I am also thinking of the health care system, which is stretched to the limit, of our public finances, which are under strain, and of the fear and despair that seem to have become part of daily life for many of us. Every glimmer of hope grows more uncertain as it is pushed back yet again.

Also on my mind are our seniors, who are facing multiple hardships. They are the most vulnerable of our fellow citizens, the ones most likely to die first from this disease. They are the most isolated among us, and they suffer the most from the loss of their buying power.

Still, I cannot help wanting to find something positive in all this. Obviously, we all know someone who has lost their life to this disease. It will be our duty and obligation to understand what happened and how it happened. We must first put our faith in knowledge and science to defeat the virus so we can put an end to all this.

We will then have to find the best way to kick-start the economy, not in terms of dollar amounts, but in terms of getting Quebecers and Canadians back on their feet and back to their normal lives. We will have to rebuild our vaccination, medical and health care systems and rebuild a more bountiful and greener economy. It is my hope that we will have understood that this must be a more compassionate and just economy.

We will, of course, have to put ideology aside and strengthen our health care system, look back at what we did well and take stock of what we did not do well.

*Routine Proceedings*

Above all else, may we always act with compassion, as we have the privilege of being healthy and being in a position to help those who do not have those same privileges. We must open our hearts to those who have struggled through this pandemic, even after being told over and over that everything would be okay. We must open our hearts to them.

• (1020)

[English]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when we acknowledge today as the anniversary of this pandemic, it requires us to reflect on who has been impacted by this. We have all been impacted. We have all felt this pandemic in some way, but I want to take a moment to think about those who have been hardest hit by this pandemic. It is with great sadness that, when we reflect on who felt this pandemic the most and who bore the brunt of it, we come up with the answer that it was our seniors. Seniors, particularly those living in long-term care, bore the brunt of this pandemic with the worst conditions and with their lives. It is a national shame that it is the case.

I think about so many people, so many loved ones, who were lost when their families could not be with them in their last days. They were lost and families could not grieve their losses, many of which were preventable. It is hard to think about what losing 22,000 Canadians means, but an incredible event on the front lawn of Parliament really illustrated what that meant. Normally, when we see protests on the front lawn of Parliament, it is about the presence of people and how many people show up. In this moment it was about the absence of people. Empty shoes were laid out to represent those we had lost. We lost so many loved ones.

I think of a man I met in Windsor who talked about his father. With a lot of difficulty, he decided he needed to go into long-term care because of his complex care issues. He was in long-term care and caught COVID-19 right around the time the vaccines were announced. He ended up losing his life. To this day, his son is haunted with the thought that if his father had gotten the COVID-19 vaccine, maybe he would still be alive.

• (1025)

[Translation]

When we think about this pandemic, we need to think about those it has hit hardest. It is a national shame that our seniors in long-term care were the ones who bore the brunt of COVID-19. We always need to remember that we could have prevented those deaths. Had we made decisions, had we expedited the vaccination process, we could have saved lives. We need to think about that.

[English]

We also need to think about front-line workers, whose courage was incredible in this pandemic. They put their lives in front of the pandemic and put their lives on the line. We are so thankful to them. However, they deserve more than our thanks. They need to be properly cared for and compensated, and we will continue to work for that.

[Translation]

We need to remember that all front-line workers are among the hardest hit. I am not just talking about health care workers, but also about those who work in retail and who hold all sorts of other jobs. They are the true heroes of this pandemic.

[English]

I also think about indigenous and racialized people who have been among the hardest hit. Indigenous communities have lived with the constant fear that an outbreak would be devastating to communities that have faced a historic and ongoing lack of access to health care. A pandemic would be devastating. To live with that fear and worry has been completely wrong, and it is why we need to make sure that, in our response to this pandemic and in vaccinating, these vulnerable communities receive the vaccine as quickly as possible.

I also want to reflect on how racialized people have been hit hard by this pandemic. Workers in factories, logistics, transportation and warehouses, who brought us food and continued the supply chain, could not work from home. They did not have that option. As a result, they were among those who were more likely to get infected by COVID-19, and again felt the brunt of this pandemic.

The impact of this pandemic has not only meant a terrible, horrible loss of life, it has also meant the loss of jobs and that small businesses have had to shut down. Specifically, women have been disproportionately impacted. Women have been more likely to lose their jobs because of this pandemic.

In our recovery, we need to never let this happen again.

[Translation]

To honour the memory of those who lost their lives during this pandemic, we need to take special, concrete measures to prevent the same thing from ever happening again.

First, we need to take care of our seniors by taking profit out of long-term care and ensuring that we have national standards to guide us. We need to use all of the knowledge we have gained during this pandemic to ensure that our seniors receive the best care possible.

[English]

We need to make sure that, moving forward, we remove profit from long-term care so our seniors no longer bear the brunt of any future outbreak, pandemic or serious event. Our seniors need to be protected, and there are clear steps we can take.

We know front-line workers need to be paid a dignified salary so they can do their work and are protected. We know that when we have a good quality of work, and good conditions of work, it directly means better care for our loved ones in long-term care.

We need to also make sure we are building resilient communities and investing in child care so women can return to work. We need to make sure we build the capacity to produce a vaccine in our own country, ideally owning it publicly so we are never in the same situation of being at the whim of international logistics and supply chain issues.

• (1030)

[Translation]

To prevent what happened with COVID-19 from happening again in the event of another pandemic, we need to invest in child care so that women, who were among the hardest hit, can return to work.

We need to have the ability to manufacture vaccines here in Canada. We also need a Canadian-controlled Crown corporation to manufacture vaccines and essential medications.

It is also important to immediately take real action to prevent a future pandemic.

[English]

When we remember the impact of this pandemic, it is not enough to remember the lives lost or the impact on jobs and lost businesses. We also have to commit to preventing this from ever happening again. There are steps we can take, and New Democrats are committed to making that happen.

[Translation]

**The Speaker:** The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands on a point of order.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I am seeking the unanimous consent of the House to give a short speech today.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed to the hon. member's request will please say nay.

There being no dissenting voice, the request is accepted.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I thank all of my colleagues who are in the House and those who, like me, are participating virtually.

Today is a day of observance in memory of all those we have lost over the course of this terrible year. More than 20,000 Canadians have died so far from COVID-19.

We share the same sentiments that others have expressed this morning for each person and each family. I sincerely thank the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the Bloc Québécois and member for Beloeil—Chambly, and the leader of the NDP for their comments.

[English]

I do not want to try to throw more thoughts into the chamber this morning, other than to say that we all grieve. We grieve a very difficult year. As many members have said, for some people it was more difficult than for others. It was more difficult for our seniors in long-term care homes, for marginalized people and for indigenous communities, but it is hard to make a list without leaving someone out.

### *Routine Proceedings*

I want to think about the moments when we were at our best through this last year. In the first few months of the pandemic, we displayed virtually no partisanship. I can clearly remember that every bill that was passed up until September was passed unanimously. Particularly in those first three or four months, there were voices on the phone as we listened to updates and briefings from our civil servants, which happened daily as well as on Saturdays and Sundays.

We could not tell, when someone opened the microphone to ask a question, if that voice was a Conservative voice, a Liberal voice, a Green voice, a Bloc voice or an NDP voice. We were all saying the same things: Can we get help fast enough? Can we help people? Can we please regard the credit unions the same way we look at the commercial banks? Can we please do those things?

I want to call out to us, because while we commemorate a year of COVID-19, it is very clear it is not over. Our ability to get through this and to save lives depends on our bringing back the best of ourselves and setting aside partisan advantage. I know it is deeply baked into our DNA to try to take shots on both sides, government and opposition, but please, Canadians do not want to see us trying to gain partisan advantage as we think about an upcoming election. They want to see us work together, and that means provinces, the federal government and political parties here in Ottawa.

In looking for empirical evidence through the pandemic, which we do by looking for the science and the evidence, we see that those countries that have done particularly well through the pandemic have been marked in the media as those led by women leaders.

I want to mark one other thing, and this is not to score a political point myself but to make a point about political culture, which is that the countries that have women leaders have another thing in common: They do not use the first-past-the-post voting system. Our voting system encourages fractured politics. The system of reward and punishment for conduct goes toward rewards for doing the mean thing, rewards for finding the dog whistle, rewards for the wedge issue. Now is not the time for that. Even though we still live under first past the post, I urge us to behave and to judge our conduct as though we did not, to pretend that we really are able to say we collaborate today because we know we can collaborate tomorrow and it will not hurt us at the polls. We need, for however long this lasts, to bring out the best in ourselves, as we did at the very beginning of the pandemic when we set partisanship aside.

I love everyone individually and collectively. I really, truly do. We have to do this together. There is no other way.

We are now in a race between vaccines and variants. We have people who will be safe soon with their vaccinations and we have people who are still at risk, and in our society as a whole, we will mark best our ability to triumph over adversity when we conduct ourselves in ways that suggest there are no parties here. God bless everyone.

*Routine Proceedings*

● (1035)

**The Speaker:** I wish to inform members that the Dominion Carillonneur is dedicating her noontime recital today to those whom we have lost to COVID-19.

[Translation]

I encourage everyone to listen to it.

\* \* \*

[English]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE****INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour on this day of commemoration to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, entitled “COVID-19 and Indigenous Peoples: From Crisis towards Meaningful Change”. I want to thank each member of the committee, from all parties, for working as a team to produce this report.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

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**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-274, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (criminal interest rate).

He said: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, for supporting this bill, which puts an end to predatory practices.

[English]

As we know, Canadians are struggling to get through this pandemic and often have no choice but to rely on short-term loans. Canadian families looking to get a short-term loan to put food on the table or to deal with an emergency will find they are often subject to interest rates that, on an annualized basis, hit 400% or 500%. As a result, a loan of a few hundred dollars can become a debt burden of thousands of dollars.

This bill would end predatory lending. We have done the work, so we sincerely hope the government will incorporate this legislation into the upcoming budget implementation act.

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

\* \* \*

● (1040)

**INCOME TAX ACT**

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-275, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (travel expenses deduction for tradespersons).

He said: Madam Speaker, this bill, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, would accomplish three things: eliminate a long-standing

tax unfairness for building trade workers, improve labour mobility, and give businesses access to an effectively larger pool of qualified tradespeople.

Currently, paragraph 8(1)(h) of the Income Tax Act generally allows an income tax deduction for employees who have work-related travel expenses that have not been reimbursed. However, a CRA interpretation continues to deny that to those working in the building trades because of the nature of the work on what are called “job sites”, often making it difficult to avoid social programs such as employment insurance. My bill would fix that by allowing a tax deduction for travel expenses for tradespeople or apprentices who are required to secure or maintain employment in construction activity at a job site.

The passing of this bill would project a net savings to the government and is the right thing to do.

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

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**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there have been discussions amongst the parties, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (additional regular benefits), the Canada Recovery Benefits Act (restriction on eligibility) and another Act in response to COVID-19, be disposed of as follows:

(a) if the bill is adopted at second reading, consideration in committee take place on Thursday, March 11, 2021, and the committee be instructed to report the bill to the House that same day by depositing it with the Clerk of the House, provided that the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, be ordered to appear as a witness, and that if the Committee has not completed clause-by-clause consideration by 11:00 p.m., all remaining amendments submitted to the Committee shall be deemed moved, the Chair shall put the question, forthwith and successively without further debate, on all remaining clauses and amendments submitted to the Committee, as well as each and every question necessary to dispose of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill;

(b) no notice of motion of amendment at report stage shall be given; and

(c) report stage and third reading stage of the bill be ordered for consideration on Friday, March 12, 2021, and that, when the Order is read for consideration for the motion at report stage, the motion to concur in the bill at report stage be deemed carried on division and the House then proceed immediately to consideration of the Bill at third reading, provided that, at the conclusion of the time provided for Government Orders or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, the bill be deemed read a third time and passed on division.

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.



I hear none. The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

There being no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.  
(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

● (1045)

[English]

## PETITIONS

### TREATMENTS FOR ALS

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, today I rise to present a petition submitted by my dear friend Mr. Norm MacIsaac and signed by over 25,000 Canadians.

These thousands of Canadians, whether they are patients, caregivers, friends and family, or concerned citizens, urge the government to do much more to support Canadians living with ALS.

The petitioners are calling on the Minister of Health to create a pilot project to reduce delays in accessing innovative and potentially life-saving treatments.

I want to be very clear: This petition is extremely important and has the support of the ALS caucus, which has members from all five political parties represented in this House. This is not a partisan issue, and I have worked very hard with my colleagues on the issue of ALS treatment and the need to rapidly improve access. For people living with ALS, time is simply something they do not have. For so many of the courageous people battling this debilitating disease—the husbands and wives, the sons and daughters, the friends—time is running out.

### HEALTH OF ANIMALS REGULATIONS

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to present the following petition.

We, the undersigned citizens of Canada, draw the attention of the House of Commons to the following:

Whereas the Government of Canada's proposed amendments to the health of animals regulations applying to livestock identification and traceability pose a threat to the future of agricultural exhibitions, fairs and rodeos;

Whereas the proposed changes would place onerous regulations on volunteer-run agricultural exhibitions, fairs and rodeos and discourage their operations;

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call on the House of Commons to take the following actions to address this situation: consult carefully with agricultural societies, exhibitions and fairs in developing these regulations and ensure that new traceability requirements do not harm agricultural societies, exhibitions and fairs so that future generations can enjoy these activities.

### RAIL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I am rising to present a petition this morning from residents of Pitt Meadows, British Columbia. The petitioners ask the

## Routine Proceedings

House to review the increased environmental impacts of the noise and the out-of-character nature, as they present it, of an increase in capacity for intermodal transportation involving the expansion of an existing intermodal rail facility. They are very concerned this will do serious damage to the quality of life and the adjacent environment of Pitt Meadows, British Columbia. It is my honour to present their petition.

## CANADA PENSION PLAN INVESTMENT BOARD

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, today I am pleased to rise to present e-petition 2966, signed by people across Canada in support of my private member's bill, Bill C-231, which would amend the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act. The petitioners note that the current value of the Canada pension plan fund investments is over \$400 billion and that many of these investments are and have been invested in companies with very questionable track records, such as weapons manufacturing, human and labour rights abuses, and are significantly contributing to climate change.

The petitioners further note that the people of Canada expect our investments to be carried out in a principled way and that the investment policy standards and procedures of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board must take these factors into account to ensure its long-term financial health.

Seeing as Bill C-231 is having its final hour of debate tomorrow, I will take this opportunity to ask my colleagues' support so our pension investments do not in any way contribute to human misery around the world.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, today I have the honour of rising and presenting e-petition 2574, which is the largest parliamentary petition in Canadian history. Over 230,000 Canadians have signed this petition to stop firearm violence in Canada. This petition acknowledges that firearm violence in Canada is caused by firearms that are smuggled in illegally from countries such as the United States and are related to gang violence.

The petition calls upon the government to recognize that law-abiding firearms owners in Canada, such as hunters and sports shooters, are some of the most highly vetted in the world and that the data shows they are not the problem when it comes to firearm violence. They are opposed to the government's "do nothing" approach to tackling the real issue.

*Routine Proceedings*

Over 230,000 Canadians are standing united to call upon the government to scrap the May 1, 2020 order in council decision related to confiscating legally owned firearms and instead pass legislation that would target criminals, stop the smuggling of firearms into Canada, go after those who illegally acquire firearms and apologize to legal firearms owners in Canada. I am proud to present the petition, and I thank the almost one-quarter million Canadians who are standing up for what is right.

\* \* \*

● (1050)

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale and as the Bloc Québécois climate change critic, I am very pleased to present this petition, which has been certified correct and has been signed by more than 2,630 concerned citizens who are calling on the Government of Canada to contribute its fair share to climate justice.

Canada's current climate policies are woefully inadequate to limit average global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, and they are putting us on a path to catastrophic warming. It is great to propose net-zero emissions by 2050, but we must take the necessary steps to reduce our national greenhouse gas emissions. We need to do more, and we need to do it now. Time is running out.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This has been raised on previously, but members are introducing petitions and they are often going far beyond the intent of our rule, which is to just state the intentions of the petition. I am wondering if you could just reinforce that issue.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I do appreciate the hon. parliamentary secretary's intervention. It is a point that was raised yesterday as well, and I do want to remind members that they are to read a summary of their petition and not put their personal point of view forward.

We will continue with presenting petitions. The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

JUSTICE

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

In the first one, the petitioners are concerned about the rise in domestic violence and are calling on the government to make the necessary changes to the Privacy Act to allow the RCMP to fully use Clare's law, which would allow the disclosure of information to an intimate partner who may be at risk. This is just one of the many tools needed to combat domestic violence.

NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the second petition is from the great people in my riding who are concerned about the government's lack of support for the oil and gas that provides jobs, affordable and reliable energy

and valuable investments to our community organizations, among other things.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to take immediate action at every opportunity to support and promote Canadian energy projects and industry, domestically and internationally, for the benefit of workers, families and communities.

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present three unique petitions, all citizen-driven, from constituents of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

The first petition is regarding truck stops in B.C. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of keeping our domestic supply chains operable. Truck drivers' work has been essential during the crisis, and they deserve our utmost appreciation. Drivers, owing to the necessity to cover long distances, must frequently stop to rest, both for their safety and the safety of others on our highways.

Drivers are unable to stop just anywhere. They must stop at rest areas or designated truck stops. The distances between these stops are not equal and, as a result, lead to the increased risk of accidents due to truck drivers' lack of rest. Without action and the resources we need, there will be more accidents.

Therefore, these citizens call upon the Government of Canada to work with the Province of British Columbia to improve truck stops and to give truckers a dignified place to rest and recharge, so they can do their work on behalf of Canadians.

● (1055)

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the second petition is regarding human trafficking.

The U.S. Department of State's 20th Trafficking in Persons Report indicates that Canada meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The TIP report notes the Canadian government did not provide comprehensive data on investigations, prosecutions, convictions or victim services. The range, quality and timely delivery of trafficking specific services vary across Canada, including persistent funding shortages.

These citizens call upon the Government of Canada to strengthen the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act to address Canada's shortcomings regarding human trafficking.

#### MEDICAL MARIJUANA

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will now present two petitions today from concerned citizens in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon regarding the use of medical marijuana licences for industrial medical marijuana production in our neighbourhoods.

People across my riding are very upset that medical marijuana licences are being used in neighbourhoods where kids live, close to schools. The smell is horrible. They are really upset that these loopholes exist, which are being used by organized crime. The petitioners are demanding that the laws change to keep our communities safe and to prevent medical marijuana from being grown in our neighbourhoods.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I do want to remind members that we need to keep these brief because there are still others who want to present petitions.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have a mere three petitions to present today.

The first petition draws the attention of the House to the Uighur genocide. It calls on the House of Commons and the Government of Canada to recognize that Uighurs in China have been and are being subject to genocide. It also calls for the use of the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, or the Magnitsky act, to sanction those who are responsible for this genocide.

#### CONVERSION THERAPY

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the second petition deals with Bill C-6, the government's conversion therapy bill. The petitioners note they are very strongly opposed to allowing conversion therapy and support a ban on conversion therapy. They also have concerns about the definition of "conversion therapy" that is used in Bill C-6. Due to serious drafting problems, this bill could end up banning private conversations that would take place between individuals and create other kinds of problems.

The petitioners call on the government to ban coercive and degrading practices that are designed to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, amend Bill C-6 to fix the definition and allow parents to speak with their own children about sexuality and gender, and to set house rules about sex and relationships.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the third and final petition highlights the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Tigray region in Ethiopia. The calls to action are for the Government of Canada to immediately call for an end to violence and restraint on all sides involved in the Tigray conflict, humanitarian access to the region and independent monitoring to be allowed, international investigations

#### Routine Proceedings

into credible reports of war crimes and gross violations of human rights, engaging directly and consistently with Ethiopian and Eritrean governments on this conflict, and promoting short, medium and long-term election monitoring in Ethiopia.

#### MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have three petitions to present today.

The first petition is on the prime importance of human life and Bill C-7. The petitioners are calling for the current amendment to protect those suffering from mental illness to be supported. They call on the government to support these measures to protect human life and that all human life should be respected. We should support Canadians who are most vulnerable and defenceless, not facilitate their deaths.

● (1100)

#### PORNOGRAPHY

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the second petition is on mandatory age verification. I rise to present petitions from hundreds of Canadians from across Canada. These petitioners are concerned with 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 children to violent sexually explicit imagery day after day, which is a form of child abuse.

As such, they note that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires Canada to develop and maintain the means to protect children from forms of media that are injurious to their well-being. As such, these petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to require meaningful age verification on all adult websites.

#### MENTAL HEALTH

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the final petition I have to present today is on mental health and suicide. We have seen throughout the COVID transition that death rate for 18-year-old to 35-year-old males, particularly in Alberta, has gone up significantly. The petitioners are calling on the government to support things such as the Trans Mountain pipeline, the northern gateway pipeline, the Keystone XL pipeline and Line 5 pipeline to ensure that the Alberta economy can continue to flourish and so that folks can get jobs and not be brought down by mental illness.

*Government Orders***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I wish to inform the House that because of ministerial statements, Government Orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

The House resumed from March 8 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (additional regular benefits), the Canada Recovery Benefits Act (restriction on eligibility) and another Act in response to COVID-19, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, as always, I am incredibly honoured to rise in the House to represent the people of Timmins—James Bay and to speak to Bill C-24, a bill that we need to pass as quickly as possible. There is an urgency to act because so many people are out of work and their EI is running out.

This is the anniversary of the calling of the pandemic. I think of how our world has been turned upside down and how it has been fundamentally transformed 365 days ago. I look back to a year ago today when we realized Parliament was going to be shut down. We thought it would maybe for two weeks. It was just impossible to think that it could be shut for three weeks. We did not have the cultural or historic imagination to find ourselves and understand ourselves in a pandemic.

I think of the first time I walked the streets wearing a mask and how strange I felt. We did not understand how the pandemic had such a powerful effect.

I have been reading Camus throughout this pandemic, because I thought there had to be a way to understand it. What Camus said so powerfully of his people, his village, was that they were not any more arrogant or dismissive than anyone else, but they had forgot to learn to be humble in the face of a pandemic. We understand wars, Camus said, but we do not understand pandemics because we cannot see them, yet they upend and transform us.

Over the past year, we have seen a complete upending of so many of our preconceived ideas. A year ago, when the pandemic was called, within two weeks, millions of Canadians could no longer pay their rent. That is a staggering thing for a Prime Minister who talked about the middle class and those wanting to join it. The Prime Minister's line again and again was the middle class and

those wanting to join it. What we have realized from the pandemic is that the middle class has been wiped out, that middle class no longer exists. What exists is precarious work, people without pensions, people working on contract. It is not just a blue-collar issue. Professors working in universities, without any kind of tenure, without any kind of support, get paid basically what people get paid at Tim Hortons. People have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on their education. They are burdened with student debt. When the pandemic came, they, like front-line workers and people who work in groceries stores, could not pay their rent if they were not able to work.

The pandemic showed us that our notions of our Canadian health system were based so much on hope and myth of this ideologized system, yet we were unable to protect the lives of hundreds of senior citizens who died needlessly in long-term care homes that were run for profit. We learned that we did not have the capacity in a nation as big as ours to produce our own PPE to keep workers safe, and we had to beg for it from other countries.

Of course, we suddenly remembered all those great ideas that Brian Mulroney, Pierre Trudeau, Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien had about not needing our own system, that we could rely on global markets, that we could not produce our own vaccine. A hundred years ago, Canada established the Connaught Labs to be a world leader in vaccine production, and it was. However, the privatization agenda of the Liberals and the Conservatives erased that.

I have been thinking about my grandmother, Lola MacNeil, who was a tough woman. She came from the Ottawa Valley and went to northern Ontario where the mining camps were booming. She met my grandfather who was a Cape Bretoner, Joseph MacNeil. He had broken his back underground in the mines. My grandmother was in the first graduating class of St. Mary's Hospital, working under the nuns, and she nursed my grandfather back to health.

My grandmother worked 12-hours shifts. When I was a child, my grandmother was hard with me sometimes. In those 12-hours shifts, she had dealt with diphtheria, small pox and she was haunted by polio.

I remember that she did not want us to go swimming up at Gillies lake, which was a little lake in Timmins. It was an offshoot of the water from where the Hollinger mine used to dump its water. My grandmother would tell us not to go swimming there, that this was where we would get polio. I asked my grandmother what polio was. When we would go to the doctor because we had a little toothache, we would get penicillin. We thought we were immune from all these things.

We did not have the cultural or historic imagination to understand the pandemic. I have been conjuring my grandmother Lola. She would know what to do. She would know how to prepare

• (1105)

I would like to say that we have learned things that will transform how we see the world for the coming generations and this young generation, generation Z. This generation has been schooled and transformed and will never see the world in the same way again. The many things of this pandemic is the failing to generation Z, to this young generation coming up that is living in such precarity. This is why we need to get Bill C-24 passed.

I know many people who have no work to go back to, people who are doing precarious work, people who are working in the arts, the incredible arts network that we have across Canada. People have gone a year without working and their EI is running out. I think of people who worked multiple jobs in restaurants, but restaurants are no longer around. Their EI is running out.

The Conservatives always talk about the debt that we will be leaving. The biggest debt that we could leave would be the debt of destroying the family and personal economies of Canadians. Through no fault of their own, they were victims of a pandemic that upended the economic system that had existed through the 20th century.

Coming out of this pandemic, we need a vision for a 21st century economy and to understand the old 20th century ideologies of trusting the market, that things will be okay, that we will give to the big boys, such as the Prime Minister cut a deal with Amazon, one of the crappiest corporations in the world. It is a corporation where the billionaire class has made more and more money, while their workers have suffered on the front lines, keeping the economy going.

We need a 21st century economy coming out of this, one that is resilient, one that understands that we have to rebuild some of the social supports our grandparents built coming out of the Second World War for a proper social safety net so no one is left behind. We need to rebuild a strong health care system, one that the profiteers are unable to exploit our parents and our grandparents in long-term care, so no one ever has to call in the army again to keep senior citizens from dying. We need to build that type of economy. To get there, Bill C-24 is one of the intermediate steps that we need to have in place.

While we reflect on the issue of our society suddenly having to deal with precarity and insecurity, many people in the country have lived with precarity, insecurity and failing health systems for decades. They are the first nations peoples of our country, living in reserves on incredible territories of natural wealth. The treaties took them off their territories and put them on what are essentially internal displacement camps with substandard housing, substandard infrastructure and no access to clean water. I mention that because yesterday the Minister of Indigenous Services made an announcement that he would create a new website to deal with the water crisis, a website.

When the Prime Minister was first elected, he said that his number one priority was to guarantee clean water to first nations. People across Canada said, of course. How could one of the richest countries in the world not guarantee clean water for its citizens? Citizens questioned how it was possible that in a country with so much beautiful, natural clean water people would have to drink from dirty and polluted water, not just in one community but in

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community after community. The Prime Minister said that we would have mission accomplished by March 2021. We are not even close to that. Last week, the Auditor General put out in a damning report that it would be years. The website that the minister is bringing out is to show the successes that the government has had, to turn away the attention from the ongoing systemic failures.

• (1110)

I mention this issue with respect to the pandemic because of the insecurity, the precariousness and the need to get these false 20th century ideologies that somehow it is the fault of the first nation communities for the fact that they do not have access to clean water. These systems have been put in place by Indian Affairs. They remain in place despite the fact that in 2005 the auditor general wrote a condemning report about Indian Affairs and the crisis in water. I remember when Paul Martin announced that he would spend billions of dollars to clean the water systems. Was his mission accomplished? Not a chance.

In 2011, the auditor general wrote a damning report on the crisis of water. People might not remember, but one of the very first acts prime minister Stephen Harper brought in when he was elected was a plan to get clean water to reserves, yet in 2011 the Auditor General report read just like in 2005.

In 2018, the parliamentary budget officer issued a report that said the government would not meet its promise. Of course, last week we had the damning report by the Auditor General.

This is not a great mystery, and I would like to walk people through why these things happen. It is structural, it is systemic and it is based on a system of racist colonialism. What happens with first nations communities is that the federal government will always insist on spending the cheapest amount of money to fix the problem. This policy of the lowest bid has meant that we have had in community after community operators come in and say they will do the job for cheap, because other more credible companies will not touch the project. They are doing them in isolated fly-in communities, where the costs are elevated. These companies know this. They will take the bid, there will be cost overruns, there will be delays and if there are problems, they will just cut corners.

That is the first failing. The minister has refused to change the policy on that.

The second issue, as the Auditor General points out, is that the government is using the same failed funding formula that goes back over 30 years, which is the refusal to put in proper operations and maintenance funding. Indian Affairs wants to keep the ministers happy and the ministers want to cut a ribbon. They want to announce "mission accomplished" and move on. However, if we do not have an operations and maintenance budget, the plants fail.

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In Marten Falls First Nation, lightning hit the sewage lift. It is an isolated community, so how will it fix that on its own? The government says that it is not its problem. A failed sewage lift begins as a problem, then becomes more systemic and then the government will spend upwards of \$2 million a year flying bottled water into a community like Marten Falls, but it will not deal with the systemic failings in the first place. We need to have operations maintenance training to ensure these plants work.

The other issue that the government has is that it will build a plant and declare victory. Plants have been built that do not meet building codes. If that happened in a provincial jurisdiction or in a municipality, there would be an investigation. When it comes to Indian Affairs, it is just another day at the office. The company that did not meet the building code at one project can get hired at the next project. Why? Because it will do it on the cheap.

We had a community in the northwest where a water plant was built, the ribbon was cut, an announcement was made and people left. The next day grandmothers had to walk to the river with buckets for water. Why? The water plant was built but no money was set aside to get pipes into the homes. Again, if that was done in a municipality, there would be an investigation. If it was done at the provincial level, people would be fired. If it was done at Indian Affairs, someone might get promoted, because it is another day at the office.

These inequities are not just in the far north. I will talk about Maniwaki. It is just up the road. There is a municipality in Maniwaki and there is the Kitigan Zibi reserve. One has clean water and one does not. How is that possible? One is under the provincial jurisdiction in Quebec that has water standards and the other is under the federal government.

• (1115)

In Attawapiskat, as well as in many other communities, they will not look at the source of where the water comes from. They want to take it from the cheapest source. If we take water from a stagnant pool, we are going to have problems. However, if the stagnant pool is close to the plant, then Indian Affairs says that is the water source. There might be a much cleaner source down the road, but Indian Affairs will not spend that money. They will take a stagnant water pool, run it into the plant, which means they will have to use an enormous amount of chemicals to keep it clean, and then they will run it through substandard pipes that cause more chemical contamination. The point is that by the time the water reaches people's homes, it is toxic.

Every region of this country has water standards that have to be met. The only place where water standards do not exist is on reserve. Why is that? The reason is that if the federal government actually had standards, it would have to spend money, and it will not spend money.

The other issue is that with the website the government is going to create, every community is going to have its own page on a website. We already have a website and the government lies on the website. The government has, for instance, Bearskin Lake as "under construction". Bearskin Lake is not under construction. We have been waiting over a year to get the feasibility report agreed to.

I have a report here called "The Project Implementation Procedures Manual for Water and Wastewater Systems" by the Public Works and Government Services Canada client service team for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. I run out of breath just saying that title. If we look at this report, it consists of page after page of hoops that indigenous communities have to jump through to satisfy the department, despite many of these communities being impoverished and in the far north.

Chief Shining Turtle, who has been a very strong voice on the need to listen to first nations and to put in place coherent systems, has told the government again and again that these manuals are manuals for failure. When I hear the Minister of Indigenous Services say that the department does not want to impose a solution and wants to work with them, he is making it sound like he is their best life coach. What he is really doing is gaslighting communities by making it seem as though it is their fault that bad decisions are made. We look at these reports and the number of hoops communities have to go through, and yet we still see communities ending up with underfunded systems that fail.

I want to give people a couple of more examples so that they really understand how this failure works systemically. The government will say that a community will get clean water, say in Attawapiskat, but it does not want to look at the whole system. The fact is that we might build a water system, a water plant, but we do not have the proper pipes to actually get clean water, so by the time the water runs through the plant to the homes, it is already contaminated with chemicals.

The government says it will get the mission accomplished on that, but what does that mean? That means that a little girl who heard that I was coming to Attawapiskat met me on a street corner. She was wearing a cardboard sign that said that she had only one kidney and needed fresh water to live. No child should have to put on a cardboard sign to say how their very life is threatened by bad water. Why does that child have only one kidney? It is because in Attawapiskat the children have been poisoned for decades by toluene and benzene that was underneath a school. Kidney damage is one of the fundamental symptoms of that.

I think of the little girl in Kashechewan whose skin rashes are so bad that the international media covered it and said that this is Canada. Every few months, my office sends her medication because they are 600 miles from a pharmacy. That is the failure of government. These are children whose lives get cut short by a precarious failed system. We are here today to push through the legislation to keep workers safe, but my call to the government is that it needs to stop playing games with the lives of first nations people when it comes to water and that we need to get a credible system in place.

• (1120)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his excellent speech. I appreciate his extensive knowledge on boil water advisories and learned a lot from his remarks. I also appreciated his story about his grandmother. It was very inspiring and I can relate to that.

My question about Bill C-24 is as follows. I agree with the member that it is important that we pass this bill. I am glad to see the parties in the House come together on this.

Is the member of the opinion that the Liberal government should have introduced this bill far sooner? I would love to hear the member's comments on that.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, yes.

We remember when the Prime Minister came in, when we were dealing with the first crisis with CERB running out. The Prime Minister was talking about jail sentences for people who had been overpaid. The fundamental problem, and we have dealt with the department on this, was that people were not getting clear answers and yet the government wanted to jail them. The government backed down on that.

The fact is that the government knows that EI is running out, and we know that many people cannot go back to work. It is the same issue we had with small business, when the government decided to give the money to the landlords. Small businesses were going under. We told the government, again and again, to fix it and to work with small business.

We have to get small business and workers through this so that when we come out of the pandemic, we have enough people who are not economically devastated to start the rebuilding and restructuring our society, so that we are able to compete and to ensure that everyone has work.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like his thoughts on EI sickness benefits. Bill C-24 would extend EI regular benefits to 50 weeks for those who apply by September 25, 2021. That is very good. However, EI sickness benefits remain capped at 15 weeks.

My colleague from Salaberry—Suroît introduced a bill to have the government extend this 15-week period to a total of 50 weeks. I think it is necessary. Earlier, the leader of the Bloc Québécois said it well: the pandemic has exposed just how much people who were already vulnerable are even more so today. I am thinking in particu-

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lar of people with recurrent cancer who have to return to work against the advice of their doctor.

Does my colleague not think it is high time this change was made for people like that?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very important question.

It is clear to me that during a pandemic, we need to ensure that workers are protected, but we must also bring in adequate resources to ensure that families and the health care system are protected.

Let us talk about the Liberals and their promises. Year after year, there is no movement on pharmacare. The government has to recognize the importance of supporting the system to benefit workers who have health problems during the pandemic.

[English]

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague's speech. I want to probe his thoughts on this particular issue.

He talked at certain points in his speech about failed 20th century ideologies, in particular failures of markets, in his view. Then the member spoke very well and very eloquently about the failures of government in the context of indigenous issues, and not just the failures of particular policies but the structural failures that exist within the department. He talked about the problems of having people who are far away making decisions for communities they are not part of and do not understand.

Implicit in the member's criticism is the idea that it is not just a problem of spending, because he pointed to examples of governments willing to spend money in ways that do not address the problem, and who are unwilling to direct resources in ways that would address the problem. Consequently, I thought it was interesting that while the member sort of made points about the failures of markets or decentralization, he then also spoke very pointedly about the failures of centralizing government.

I would like to hear the member's reflections on that. I do not have an answer to the question, but I would like to hear his reflections. If markets are failing in his view and if national governments are failing, what is the structural solution to the problem that he has identified?

• (1125)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question.

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I was not saying the failure of governments in regard to decentralization, I think the failure of the 20th century ideology was the belief, simply, in globalization, that global markets would meet all needs. What we have learned is that we actually need to have a national vision for our economy, and that has been made very clear.

The issue with government failings in indigenous affairs is with another fundamental 20th century ideology, which is colonialism. This is a racist system. This has never been done in concert with first nations. This has never been done with a vision for the long term.

If we are going to spend money, and we have spent enormous amounts of money, it has to be done with an actual coherent policy that we are going to get to another level of equilibrium. The failure of 20th century ideology, in terms of Indian Affairs, has been evident since the get-go, and it is still there.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I listened to the speech of the member for Timmins—James Bay with great interest. It is very clear that his knowledge of and passion for the indigenous issues, especially on the boil water advisories, are very much there for all to see.

In his earlier comments on Bill C-24, he mentioned that we have to start investing in a 21st-century economy that is there for workers. Throughout the pandemic, we in the NDP have been highlighting the impossible choice that many workers often have to make between their health and their source of income.

When we look at Bill C-24, there was a missed opportunity to extend the sickness benefits of employment insurance from 15 weeks to 50 weeks. I have met many constituents who approach the end of the 15-week mark and have to go back to work when they are not quite ready to do so. I think the pandemic has taught us some serious lessons there.

In the context of his comments on how we build a 21st-century economy, could he expand a bit more on the kinds of supports we need to put in place to make sure workers are not making those impossible choices?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the excellent work he has done on this file.

What we have seen in the pandemic is the priorities. In the middle of the pandemic, as small-town businesses were going under across the country, the Prime Minister stood with Amazon and said it was our partner. He was basically privatizing a public service that already existed and giving it to Amazon, one of the crappiest corporations on the planet. It has routinely denied basic fair wages. We are working with Amazon while small businesses are going under and working with the billionaire class that is making more money while workers are not getting basic benefits. This is a failed approach.

*[Translation]*

**Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member from Timmins—James Bay for his speech. He spoke emotionally about his grandmother and her accomplishments, and about the drinking water problems in first nations communities.

I would like to know what he thinks of Bill C-24, which would extend seasonal workers' EI coverage. Would he care to comment on that?

• (1130)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question and tell her that my grandmother was indeed an extraordinary woman.

I think it is critical and urgent for parliamentarians to support Bill C-24.

However, I would like to point out the current government's lack of vision as to the necessity of implementing a plan that would completely meet workers' needs. That is not what the Liberals are doing right now.

I am prepared to support this bill. However, we must urge the government to fulfill its obligations to working men and women and their families.

*[English]*

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my excellent and hard-working colleague from Calgary Midnapore.

Today, we are debating Bill C-24. I have a couple of quick observations about the context of this debate. This is another example where we can clearly see the willingness of the Conservatives to work constructively on areas where we share a perspective on the need to move forward with the government on a particular bill. We saw this earlier this week: As a result of a Conservative motion, we were able to debate quickly and pass Bill C-18. Today, we have worked with the government to create a framework to move forward on Bill C-24.

In the case of both of these bills, there is a relevant deadline the government has ignored up until this point. The leadership of our party has pushed the government to move forward with things that are supposed to be its legislative priorities but have clearly not been. We see how the Prime Minister has been trying to spin a narrative that Parliament is not working, as a way to justify his plans for an election in the middle of a pandemic.

There is no doubt that the Conservatives do not support some aspects of the government's legislative agenda, and some require further study and debate. However, in this Parliament in particular, the 43rd Parliament, the Conservatives have worked constructively to quickly advance legislation when there is a shared sense of essential urgency on matters.



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Bill C-24, like Bill C-18 and other legislative measures we have seen in this Parliament, is in the category of measures that we are supporting and have worked with the government to move forward. I hope the government, members of the media and the public will take note of the instances of co-operation that have taken place, often led by the Conservatives, and will point out the flaws in the narrative the Prime Minister is trying to spin to justify his pandemic election plans.

Bill C-24 is an important bill that expands benefit programs in the context of the pandemic, and the Conservatives are supportive of it. At the same time, we have highlighted the need for the government to have a broader vision of where our country is going economically in the midst of the pandemic and what we hope will soon be the economic recovery coming out of it.

While other parties are talking only about spending and the benefits, the Conservatives recognize the need to have strong economic growth as the basis for providing strong benefits. We have legitimately pointed out the issues around the significant debt and deficit we are accruing during this period of time. Other parties in the House want to present a false choice: either we support benefit programs and have dramatic growth in our debt and deficit or we do not have the debt and deficit and leave people out in the cold. We view that as a false choice. We believe it is very possible and indeed important to support a strong social safety net, but that exists on the foundation of a strong economy. If we support the development of a strong economy, with a vision for jobs, growth, opportunity and investment in this country that gives people the opportunity to work, then we also increase our capacity to provide people with support when they find themselves in situations where they are not able to work.

Our vision for an economy of the future is one that involves a strong economy, a strong community and a strong social safety net. We believe those elements need to exist in tandem. A strong economy means repealing some measures the Liberals have put in place, like Bill C-48 and Bill C-69, which impede the development of our natural resource sector. It means working to strengthen our manufacturing sector. It means taking note of some problems, like the slave labour around the world that is producing cheap products that come into the Canadian marketplace. That is obviously terrible from a human rights and justice perspective, but it also impacts Canadian workers. It is an economic issue and a justice issue when human rights violations are linked to unfair trading practices.

• (1135)

We need to stand up for Canada's manufacturing sectors that may be impacted by those kinds of practices. We need to support the development of our natural resource sectors. We need to expand access to markets, especially in like-minded countries. That is why the Conservatives support working to expand trade and partnerships around the world with like-minded partners in the Asia-Pacific region. We are also looking to expand our economic engagement with Africa, building on some of the trade agreements we have signed previously, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Canada-EU free trade deal negotiated under the previous Conservative government.

We need to think about rationalizing regulations and approving projects that make sense so that Canada can once again be seen as an optimal destination for investment and growth. If that plan for investment, growth and jobs includes an appropriate respect for our natural resource and manufacturing sectors, we will be able to create the conditions that allow unemployed Canadians to get back to work.

That is the strong economy piece. Of course, a strong economy helps to generate the revenue for governments that allows governments to provide support to people without creating the kind of unmanageable deficits that we currently face. Having a strong economy is therefore very important.

I talked about a strong economy, strong communities and a strong social safety net. For many people who face challenges, whether they are unemployment challenges, health challenges or personal struggles of various kinds, the first line of support is the communities they are a part of. In recent decades, we have seen a decline in the strength of community ties, a greater social atomization. As a society, we need to think about how we can strengthen the forms of local community that are such a vital form of initial support. We should think of a big society, a strong society and strong community as being the first line of support and defence when people are confronted with various challenges in their lives.

Part of how the national government can be a part of supporting the idea of strengthening the community is to work constructively in partnership with community organizations and look for opportunities to learn from what communities are doing. These could be cultural associations, faith communities or service clubs. We should better partner with local organizations in the delivery of public services.

There are so many ways this applies. One thing that has been a great interest of mine is the model for the private sponsorship of refugees. Through it, the government works collaboratively with private organizations that are sponsoring refugees to come to Canada. We know that those who have community connections through private sponsorship generally have better outcomes than people who are publicly sponsored, because those who are publicly sponsored are not immediately brought into an existing community that knows them and wants to work with them. Across the board, whether it is combatting addictions, supporting families, addressing joblessness or addressing recidivism, the government needs to have a much better vision of the opportunity for partnership as a means of addressing challenges and building strong communities.

As I said, we need a strong economy, a strong community and then a strong social safety net. If we have the strong community and strong economy pieces in place, we will also be in a position collectively to put the full extent of our resources into supporting those who fall through the cracks with a strong social safety net.

The Conservatives are very supportive of that. We believe, though, that if we neglect the strong economy and the strong community pieces, it will become much more difficult to have a strong social safety net while preserving some degree of fiscal sanity. What we see with the government is a desire to push forward spending on the social safety net, but a lack of vision for the strong economy and strong community pieces.

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● (1140)

The social safety net needs to be there for those who are not able to benefit from a strong economy or from strong community structures that are in place. However, if we only have the social safety net piece, and not the economy piece or the community piece, then the pressure that falls on that social safety net will be so significant that we will find ourselves in an unsustainable fiscal situation. That is the challenge we need—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I am sorry. I forgot to give notice that time was running out.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for talking about the importance of making sure that Canadians get what they need.

However, I really did not appreciate his comments at the beginning, when he said that Conservatives were demonstrating that they were trying to work to get this legislation through, and that it was through pressuring the government that eventually this all happened. Quite the opposite has been going on. The pressure has been put on the Conservative Party, both publicly and in the House, to get to the table to advance legislation. I moved that we work into the evenings four times last week, and the Conservatives voted against it each time. It is only because Canadians are at the brink of not receiving EI, when they need it so badly, that the Conservatives have finally come to the table.

I respect the member. He does a good job of speaking in the House, but the reality is that his facts are not straight.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, I was very precise in saying that Conservatives had been prepared to work with the government on issues such as Bill C-18 and Bill C-24.

The member raises the issue of the government's desire to expedite legislation that would effectively undermine suicide prevention in this country. The government's new position on Bill C-7, which has been barely debated in the House and never studied in a House of Commons committee, would allow those whose primary health complaint is mental health related, who are dealing with depression or other mental health challenges, to be given suicide facilitation by the government.

That is a deadly serious issue. It is dead wrong, and it is strongly opposed by mental health advocates and disability rights organizations. I know that the member and many other members are receiving phone calls from constituents who have been blindsided by this rush to have state-facilitated suicide for the mentally ill. We will oppose that. That is dead wrong and—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** We have to go to other questions.

The hon. member for Repentigny.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the member concluded his speech by talking about the social safety net.

I would like to pick up on that, since it is very important to the Bloc.

Bill C-24 amends provisions dealing with EI. A Bloc Québécois motion received a majority of votes, but it is not being reflected in Bill C-24.

Does the member not think this would have been a good opportunity to increase the number of days of sickness benefits?

[*English*]

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, there are provisions in the bill that we support. However, I know that this bill will go to committee and some of the proposals, such as the one the member mentioned, could be considered at committee.

Further to the timeline issue, if the government had proposed this bill earlier, as had been suggested, there would have been more time and more scope for a committee study of some of these attendant, related issues that the member mentioned. Unfortunately, the government has continually mishandled its legislative calendar, which may make it more difficult to study all of those issues given the time constraints that the government has created.

● (1145)

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I heard the member ask a very good question of the previous speaker, a member from the New Democratic Party, about systematic and structural change. I would like to put this question forward to him.

Were he in the position of a minister, or advising a minister within the government as a member of the government, what would he implement and enact to ensure that the situation we are currently in does not happen again, where we are constantly responding and not providing enough time for the House and all members of the House to give input into the legislation for the best outcome?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, I am looking forward to my colleague's speech. The government has to prioritize and it should be working to move forward on these benefit supports. We are in the middle of a pandemic, it is the 10-year anniversary of the signing of the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the government is trying to rush forward a euthanasia and assisted suicide bill that is opposed by all disability stakeholders in this country. The government is trying to push these kinds of bills through, while not spending the time required on the health and economic challenges our country is facing. The government's priorities are out of whack right now.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am very proud to be here today speaking to Bill C-24.

I want to recognize the excellent shadow minister in charge of this process: the wonderful member for Kildonan—St. Paul. It is excellent that she is leading the charge on our side for this. She is representative of a generation of young women who are excited about the potential future of our nation. The member and I are young mothers, but I am not as young as the member for Kildonan—St. Paul. My riding is also filled with young soccer moms who are excited about the future of Canada. With this opportunity for vision and clarity, and a strategy for our economy and our workforce going forward, I am very happy to have this opportunity.

I am going to continue the message that the previous speaker, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, spoke about. I would not doubt it if my colleagues from other opposition parties had the same sentiment of the necessity for us to hold the government to account, but also the frustration on two parts, the first being that we have had to return to this chamber to vote several times to fix legislation.

Of course, it was our duty to Canadians. This is what we do as the official opposition. We look for gaps and we attempt to address those gaps for Canadians. With each piece of legislation that is implemented, and as that legislation continues, we see further permutations of the legislation that we could not have possibly accounted for when we first brought the legislation forward.

In my role with the official opposition, and as the former vice-chair of the HUMA committee, certain examples of this come to mind in addition to Bill C-24, which we are here fixing and amending today for the government. These include the wage subsidy, which started at a meagre, paltry 10%. Through our actions, we were able to improve it to 70% and really provide some sustenance to many Canadians and companies that required it. Maternity benefits are another example. I was just talking about the joy of being a mother, and I cannot tell members how many expectant mothers and families contacted my office when these programs were first implemented, to point out that they had been omitted. This includes the Canada emergency business account as well, and the changes that our side made to it.

Indeed, it is frustrating, but of course, that is our obligation. Frankly, it is insulting that this would be used against us to say we are not moving government business along for the benefit of Canadians when, in fact, it is the opposite. We are here to address the gaps for Canadians and to hold the government to account. We will continue to do that, no matter what the government says.

This brings me to our current situation, which is indeed very frustrating. I am sure members have heard the job numbers. We lost 213,000 jobs in January. When I think of those job numbers, I cannot help but think of what types of jobs we are creating in this nation at this time. I think of my incredible upbringing in Calgary Midnapore. Every day, my constituents and their parents were fortunate to go to stable, secure jobs with benefits and pensions.

Even as we see the job numbers slipping, what types of jobs remain? Canadians deserve jobs with benefits, pensions, certainty and stability. This is what we need during this time of the pandemic.

To add to that, Canada's unemployment rate is currently 8.5%, which is among the highest in the G7, despite spending more than

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any other country in the OECD. As of January 2021, according to Statistics Canada, Canada had 858,000 fewer jobs than it did in February of last year, before COVID-19 began. That number is very close to one million.

Canada has now gone 460 days without a federal budget. I check my bank balance every day, if not every second day, so to go this long without a federal budget is unbelievable. The Prime Minister has indicated that Canadians cannot expect one any time soon. Again, it is certainty and clarity that Canadians are looking for from their government at this time, and the government is not providing it.

● (1150)

As the shadow minister for this portfolio and our shadow finance minister have indicated, there has been no plan for how the government will set this ship straight, how it will get the economy back on track or how it will create a plan for jobs for all Canadians, and in particular, as I stressed within my speech, for 100,000 women. This is a “she-cession”, and we need to address that. The Prime Minister needs to address that, but he is not addressing it for women. He is not addressing it for the entire economy, for all Canadian workers.

Near the beginning of the pandemic, in the summer, I was very proud to complete the Calgary Midnapore Economic Recovery Taskforce report. This was an effort to evaluate the challenges businesses and workers were facing across my riding and how we could evaluate those, and then come up with recommendations for the government to move forward. I would suggest the Prime Minister could use this as a plan for the nation.

I want to thank all the incredible constituents from across my riding who took part in this, small business owners and the workers at small, medium and large enterprises, for their contributions. No doubt their current challenges include liquidity. Is that not always something a business is concerned about? As the proud daughter of small business owners, a business that has now been passed on within the family, we constantly worried about liquidity.

Operations are another worry, of course, and how to keep things functioning. Talent is another challenge, and is very important relative to the bill here today, as is the supply chain: being concerned about what is in the pipe and what we are going to push out. Government regulations are another challenge that have a considerable effect on the work of business. Anticipated challenges include talent, growth and adjusting to the new normal, which a year later we are just starting to do.

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To delve into things such as liquidity, businesses overwhelmingly expressed that their credit and cash reserves were nearly or fully depleted, with 47% of businesses worried they would not be able to financially sustain themselves beyond one year. Deferrals were a concern as well. Regarding operations, 37% of businesses in my riding said they had diversified their business models and were adjusting to the new reality.

To summarize, many business owners identified a lack of predictability regarding regulations. I have said over and over that we need clarity at this time. Of course, business owners at that time were worried about the second wave, and we have come to see a third wave approaching. We hope not, but it seems to be on the horizon and is something we must consider.

These were the findings within my riding. I would ask that we look to the future, as I always like to do, with hope and optimism, which is what we are doing on this side of the House, instead of what the other side of the House is doing with ideology, political decisions and no coordinated strategy. I would suggest that the Prime Minister look to his Industry Strategy Council, which did an incredible overview of what will be necessary to do going forward. I would suggest the Prime Minister listen to the Business Council of Canada.

I would provide the Prime Minister with three recommendations. First, he should do a coordinated sector consultation. The government cannot even get a plan out for the sector I have been following so closely, the airline sector, so it should do a national coordinated sector consultation to determine a path forward for the economy. Second, as I have stated previously in the House, he should do a national inventory of our resources to determine what we have a surplus of to trade, as we discuss within the House the new NAFTA and the U.K.-Canada negotiations we moved forward with just yesterday. We need to evaluate mineral and technical resources. Finally, we need to think about our future workforce based on current trends. We need to look forward with hope, optimism and, most importantly, a coordinated strategic approach.

• (1155)

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Alberta's intervention in the House today was very interesting and very propositional, and I appreciated its tone. I have a quick question for her. I know that she is looking at how we can support small businesses and continue to make sure they are able to survive this pandemic.

As to the initial program for rent subsidies, which was driven by landlords and insufficient to meet the needs of small businesses, would my colleague agree that it should initially have been driven by tenants and been retroactive to April 1, 2020, when businesses started to realize the impacts that COVID-19 was going to have on them?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona. It should have been tenant-initiated and oriented. I think that would have helped incredibly from the outset.

I have such respect for the member. I know that we share a background in foreign affairs and international development. We have had many lovely conversations about that, in particular on a flight.

Of course, we dream about Canadians taking flights again soon in the near future.

As the member so wisely looked for possibilities here, I would also ask that she look within our province at possibilities within the energy sector.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her speech.

She talked about the workers in her riding. There are also workers in my riding who have called my constituency office because they are caught up in red tape related to their EI claims. Things do not always go smoothly. The government cannot keep up with the demand, and people are letting us know. We are trying to get things moving.

Does my colleague think the government is doing enough to support these individuals who are already facing difficult situations and must also deal with all the EI red tape?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I think that we are here to help our constituents, whether they work for a big corporation or a small business. People who had a hard time finding work before the pandemic had a hard time during the pandemic and will continue to have a hard time after.

I completely agree that we need to find ways to create new jobs for Canadians. I agree with my colleague. We are all here to ensure that Canadians have jobs, with big corporations or small businesses. This is important for the future.

• (1200)

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I hope the Conservatives understand that pushing forward with concurrence motions and the various other tactics they have used in the House serve to slow down the legislative process to the detriment of Canadians who need the supports. They might be upset with this side of the House for one reason or another, but they are taking it out on Canadians by doing that.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, we are becoming all too familiar with the member for Kingston and the Islands' questions and their tone. Unfortunately, it is we on this side of the House who must work doubly hard to protect Canadians and advance their interests. As we have seen, the government is incapable. We knew it before the pandemic, but that has been verified throughout this process.

Certainly, the government could not have fixed Bill C-24 before the pandemic hit, but going forward, there is no way that Canadians can have confidence in the government to improve our economy and increase the number of jobs for Canadian workers.

[Translation]

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge my colleague, the opposition transport critic. That was an excellent speech. I would also like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Chilliwack—Hope, in B.C.

Today we are debating Bill C-24, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act, the Canada Recovery Benefits Act and another act in response to COVID-19.

The past year has been an unusual one, so I want to spare a thought for everyone who has suffered because of COVID-19, for all those we have lost. I also want to take this opportunity to extend my condolences to everyone who lost a loved one or family member. I want them to know that they are in my thoughts. They have had to mourn under very unusual circumstances. My thoughts are with them today, but I want to remind everyone that they must remain in our thoughts every day, not just today.

We need Bill C-24 because the Liberal government was too hasty and did not do its job properly in September. Still today, the government continues to improvise. We know that we are in the midst of a pandemic, but we can still do things right even if we have to act quickly. We can do two things at the same time and do them properly and intelligently so that our efforts are successful and ill-conceived bills do not have to be fixed and reworked.

My colleagues and I are ready to work to improve the bill, and we have always been clear about that. Unfortunately, the government wants to make us look like the villains, the bad guys. I find that rather strange since we have been ready for six weeks.

My colleague, the House leader for the opposition and member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, has asked the government House leader countless times to introduce this bill. The Liberal government's political strategy has been to have us play the bad guys. Are they doing that in their own political interest or in the interest of Canadians? To me, the answer is obvious.

On January 2, we condemned the government's decision to extend the Canada recovery sickness benefit, commonly known as the CRSB, to Canadians returning home from holiday travel.

The government told people not to travel, but those who decided to head south for a little sun were given a two-week lockdown and \$1,000 upon their return in the form of the CRSB. I am not criticizing those travellers, because they were allowed to travel. It is the government that did not do its job properly.

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I will quote my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles who said, “If nothing is done, if the government does not take action, millions of dollars, billions of dollars will be at stake. People who would not normally be entitled to receive [the CRSB] will get it because this is a botched program that was poorly thought out and is being poorly enforced.”

I repeat, the government is improvising. This is more wasteful spending. The Prime Minister ultimately acknowledged the flaw in the bill.

On January 5, 2021, during his first press conference of the year, the Prime Minister said that the intention was never to send a cheque to those who decided to travel despite the public health advisories. He went on to say that those who travelled south would not be entitled to this financial assistance. On January 29, in front of his house on Sussex Drive, he announced he was fixing the situation with travellers who can receive \$1,000 in financial assistance after travelling south.

Now on March 11, today, we are finally talking about it in the House of Commons. It is shameful because it was first brought up on January 5 and was clearly announced at a press conference on January 29. It took a long time for this to be brought before the House. It just shows the government's incompetence and inability to react quickly and conscientiously.

● (1205)

As I mentioned, the Conservatives are ready to work to help facilitate the business of Parliament, and yet, clearly, the Liberals' current strategy is to blame us by accusing us of filibustering. That is completely false.

I want to go back to September 28, 2020, when a bill was introduced. Today we are debating Bill C-24, which aims to fix that legislation. A tremendous amount of time has passed between the two.

In September 2020, with the help of the NDP, the Green Party and independent members, the Liberals succeeded in limiting debate in Parliament.

It should be understood that if the Conservatives oppose the bill, hard-working Canadians who need help will accuse us of not wanting to offer them financial assistance. We would then be seen as the bad guys. If, on the other hand, we support the bill, we will be accused of taking the government at their word and wanting to rush through the process.

In times of crisis, we need to be able to compromise and to have faith in the government and its team to provide adequate financial assistance and programs. If adjustments need to be made afterwards, we can do so quickly.

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This government has proven to be incapable of responding, by a multitude of metrics. This government is not able to stay ahead of the pack. It has not yet announced a recovery plan, while many countries announced theirs several months ago.

The United States has a new president, and it took him just a few days to announce his economic recovery plan.

Canada's Prime Minister, who was elected in 2015 and who is in his second term, has not managed to present an economic recovery plan. That is not reassuring.

I also want to talk about the commercial rent assistance program. In the spring, this program was originally designed for landlords, which proved to be a monumental failure. It took the government six months to adapt and come up with a new program, which now provides rent assistance to tenants.

Back in the spring the government set some very detailed eligibility criteria, which included arm's length tenants. That criterion has been left out of the renters' assistance program.

In my riding, a young business owner was entitled to assistance through his landlord in the spring, but due to the arm's length relationship criterium, he was not entitled to assistance in the fall.

I asked the minister to remedy that. Is that going to take another six months?

Meanwhile, the business owner, who wants to participate in the economic recovery, is unfortunately not getting the financial help he needs to get through the crisis. He will not be able to share in the prosperity of our country's economic recovery. I find that outrageous.

I would like us to take advantage of the current situation to encourage and invite the government to act quickly to give tools and carefully targeted assistance to those who really need it.

This government's problem, if I may so, is that it is cowardly. It implements universal programs but without the accountability and rigour needed to specifically respond to the needs of Canadians and business owners who want to participate in the economic recovery.

• (1210)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have heard the comments from Conservatives a few times already today about how we are back here trying to fix other programs that were previously created and that if the government had got it right the first time, we would not be in this position. The member was talking about this particular program and how we need to fix it. Then he spoke about rent relief as another program that had to be fixed, but the reality is that federal governments do not have jurisdiction over rent and did not have the quick access that it needed at the time.

The reality is that these programs were developed almost instantaneously over days and weeks to get the supports to Canadians, when they would normally have taken a couple of years to develop.

More importantly, hindsight is 2020 and it is easy to see these things in the rearview mirror. If the member thinks the government

should have picked up on these things originally when these problems happened, why did he not bring these forward before he supported the adoption of these programs through unanimous consent?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] same resources as the government.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I would also like to rise on a point of order before I respond to the point of order raised by my colleague from Kingston and the Islands.

However, it seems as though there is someone else online. Can we make sure that everyone's microphone is on mute?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier has the floor, but I have another point of order.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan interrupts the House routinely by unmuting his microphone and adding commentary. I know he is a fan of heckling; he brings it up a lot, but he has been called out for this on a number of occasions by different members of the House and the Chairs. I would urge you to do something about this so that it does not continue to be an obstruction to the deliberative process in the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands for his comments on the issue. Members well know that heckling is something that is part of the back and forth, the conversation, here in the House of Commons. It is a different thing when members are participating online because those members, by virtue of using the audio on their computer, effectively cancel the other member's audio who has been recognized by the Chair. I think members are aware of this and I do urge them to follow that protocol properly and refrain from heckling using their audio in this manner. If they are in the House, it is a different situation. There is a tolerance for that, as members can appreciate, but I encourage all members to follow that protocol for our hybrid sessions.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay on the same point of order.

• (1215)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I have said this already this week, but I think you are an excellent Speaker. I think you give really judicious rulings.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I would like to give a special thanks for your patience in serving the people of Canada in the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I do not know if that is a point of order, but I appreciate the hon. member's additional comments on the matter.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo my colleague from Timmins—James Bay's compliment on your excellent work. You have earned it. I appreciate your work as Speaker of the House and occupant of the chair.

I would like to begin by responding to the point of order raised by my colleague from Kingston and the Islands. I do not think my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan was ill-intentioned. It happens to us all. Unfortunately, technology being what it is, mistakes happen. Still, I do want to point out that we have made major progress and quickly adapted to this new technology and a hybrid Parliament.

Moving on, I will now answer the question posed by my colleague from Kingston and the Islands. This is not a jurisdiction issue, but is he admitting that his government is incompetent? The program that was supposed to help businesses pay their commercial rent was created by the federal government and is under federal jurisdiction.

The provisions of this program as it appeared last spring were legitimate, but poorly constructed. The government should have simply done a copy-paste. If I may offer some advice after the fact, the government should have hung on to the arm's length eligibility criteria with safeguards. There was nothing wrong with them. The government should have included them in the version of the program that was launched in the fall. Unfortunately, yet again, the government improvised and went too fast.

The thing is, it is possible to do things both fast and well. Sadly, the government is incapable of doing that, and my colleague from Kingston and the Islands may have publicly admitted that the government is incompetent.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I know he was outraged that people were taking non-essential trips and they should not be entitled to the benefit. The Bloc Québécois is also outraged, and we actually suggested that once the situation was corrected, it should be retroactive to when the measure was put in place, not just to January 3 as the Prime Minister originally suggested.

I did not really hear the Conservative Party offer a solution. What, if anything, do they propose?

I think the negotiations we had with the government resulted in the fact that this measure will now be retroactive to the right time.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia. I especially appreciate her environmental awareness, and I salute her.

My answer is that, yes, we need to fix the situation the Liberals have created. Now we need to sit down and figure out how to do that. I do not know the details of the negotiations that took place between the Bloc Québécois and the Liberal Party. There seems to be some political and strategic jousting going on to set the stage for the next election campaign.

### *Government Orders*

I would turn the question back on my colleague. What behind-the-scenes pact or deal did the Bloc Québécois make with the Liberal Party of Canada?

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier for his excellent speech today.

I have a very simple question. Is the federal government capable of managing this pandemic and economic crisis without a federal budget?

• (1220)

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I salute my colleague, and I want him to know that I really appreciate his work and his question.

I feel compelled to answer him very clearly, and I will be blunt. No, the current Liberal government is not capable of properly managing public funds and the economic recovery of our country.

[English]

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as always, it is a pleasure to speak in the House on behalf of my constituents. We are here today to discuss Bill C-24. Because of the government's failure to manage the House of Commons effectively, we are seeing its has created a crisis through its mismanagement. Once again we are up against a hard deadline, with benefits expiring for Canadians, and the government not managing the House calendar or its legislation so we can consider this fully. The bill before us today would expand the spending of the government by \$12.1 billion. Because of how this is going to go, with members debating it for about six hours, that is about \$2 billion an hour for every hour we will be able to discuss and review it here.

As has been said, this would fix a problem that is a result of the government's first attempt to provide benefits to Canadians, Bill C-2, which was rushed through the House at that time to meet a deadline the government knew about, but failed to plan for or to present legislation in a timely fashion to the House to address. That because the Prime Minister prorogued the House, shut everything down, eliminated all of the legislation that was on the Order Paper because of the WE Charity scandal. Things were getting a little too hot on that at the time, and it was time to shut down the investigations into the Prime Minister and his involvement in the WE Charity scandal, so he prorogued Parliament, which created this rush to get legislation before an October deadline when the CERB would end.

The bill was rushed through and Liberals did not realize that they had provided in that legislation a \$1,000 bonus to people who had gone on leisure vacations outside of the country. People could apply and get \$1,000 for the time they were at home during their 14-day quarantine after international travel. The bill passed, as has been said, because we needed to get the benefits to Canadians whose CERB was expiring, but there were no committee studies or debate in the House because of the government's mismanagement of this file. It saw a deadline, it did not care, and it rushed and made mistakes. That is indicative of the government's approach.

### *Government Orders*

We are seeing it again today not only in this debate, but also in another important debate. I would argue that one of the most important debates the House will have in this Parliament is on Bill C-7 and the Senate amendments to it. That debate is being cut short because of the government's failure to plan or provide legislation and opportunities for parliamentarians to intervene on behalf of their constituents. We have a situation where, later this day, debate will be shut down on Bill C-7 and the Senate amendments, which call for the expansion of medical aid in dying to include people who only have mental illness or disabling conditions and who will now have access to medical aid in dying, something that has not been studied by this Parliament or in committee.

Because of the government's mismanagement and failure to respond in a timely fashion to court decisions and legislative deadlines, we now have a situation where yet another bill, in addition to this one, is jammed up against a deadline. The Liberals are forcing parliamentarians to address complex issues, in this case, life and death issues, with almost no time in the House because of their failures and mismanagement. People in my riding are very concerned about this. They are concerned about the government's inability to manage the House and debate on legislation in a way that addresses their concerns.

People have written to me about it, and there is one organization in particular from my riding that I want to highlight. The Chilliwack Society for Community Living signed an important letter from the Vulnerable Persons Standard, calling on members of Parliament to do better. It says, "Bill C-7 sets apart people with disabilities and disabling conditions as the only Canadians to be offered assistance in dying when they are not actually nearing death.... Bill C-7 is dangerous and discriminatory.... Canadians with disabilities are hearing MPs and Senators arguing that lives just like theirs featuring disabilities just like theirs are not livable. This is harmful and hurtful and stigmatizing."

• (1225)

It goes on to say:

Take your time, start over, and get this right. As you do so, be careful to heed the advice of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: "Listen closely to the most directly affected. Their antenna is highly attuned to ableism. When they see it, you should pause and reflect before proceeding."

Bill C-7 is not the answer.

This is another example, as is Bill C-24, of a government failing to take the time to allow Parliament to deliberate to get something right. If we had had the time to deliberate on Bill C-2, if the government had not shut down Parliament and rushed that up against the CERB deadline, I am sure that someone along the way, either in debate or as a witness at committee, would have identified this failure to focus the benefits where they were meant to be focused: on people who had to take sick leave because of COVID-19, not on those who needed to take a vacation. Had we had proper debate, that failure would have been identified.

Here again today, with just six hours of debate, it has to be rushed. After two hours, we are accused of being obstructionist and failing to do our job on behalf of Canadians. Only a Liberal government would think the solution to the problems it created by rushing a bill through Parliament previously could be solved by rushing an-

other bill through Parliament again. That is the failure of the government.

What are we doing here? There is \$12.1 billion to extend benefits to Canadians, which we have supported. All along we have supported the benefits going to Canadians who, through no fault of their own, have found their workplaces closed and their opportunities eliminated and have been forced into restrictive lockdowns. When governments force people out of their jobs and bring in conditions that restrict them from going to work, they have an obligation to provide them with an alternate income, but this cannot go on forever.

Here we are, and we are again extending it. The Conservatives support extending benefits to the people who need them, but what we also need is a plan to get past this, a plan to address the lockdowns, a plan to show Canadians there is hope for the future. That is why we have been calling on the Prime Minister to present that plan to Canadians. We have introduced a petition. The member for Calgary Nose Hill has called on the Prime Minister to use the tools we have gathered in the last year to help us get past this. We are calling on the Prime Minister to immediately present a clear plan to get Canadians safely out of lockdown. We are calling for it to include data-driven goals, a plan of action, and a timeline to achieve those goals and ensure the plan is articulated to Canadians so that they can have hope about when life and business will return to normal.

We know there have been some problems with vaccine procurement and rollout. We know there have been issues with conflicting advice being given to Canadians during this pandemic. Today we are a year into it; we have commemorated the lives that have been lost, but we also need to think about the lives that are being severely and permanently impacted right now. Some people are experiencing extreme mental health concerns. Others are not getting the health screening they need for cancer and heart disease. Other people are unable to join with others to worship freely, as is protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We need to plan forward so that we are not coming up against deadlines again and again, as the government has, to extend these benefits over and over again. We will be there when Canadians need us, but we also need to start talking about a plan and the way forward to ensure that these are not permanent benefits. The next benefit is to help our economy grow and help people get past these restrictions safely while listening to public health advice. We need a plan from the government, and we have not received it. All we have seen from the government is incompetence, mismanagement of the House, and mistakes being made time and time again. We need to do better.



• (1230)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely wrong. The Conservatives have become a destructive force, playing a destructive role inside the House of Commons in recent weeks and months. Let there be no doubt about that. Even some opposition parties have recently commented on the role the Conservatives have been playing. The only reason we are seeing what we have seen in the last 24 hours is that they have been shamed into doing some of the things that they are currently doing.

The member complained about Bill C-24. There are a number of pieces of legislation the Conservative Party has deliberately attempted to delay or prevent from passing. Bill C-7 is a good example. We attempted to extend the hours in that case.

The member talked about plenty of opportunities to provide due diligence. Will the member take responsibility for the irresponsible behaviour of the official opposition and recognize that it is time we start working together once again—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, I know the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader thinks it is offensive when anyone other than him is speaking in the House of Commons. When anyone other than him is speaking, they are filibustering. When anyone other than him is speaking, it is obstructionist. He was calling us obstructionist on Bill C-24 two hours after the bill had been read in the House for the first time. The second reading debate had barely started when this member was already accusing opposition members of obstruction.

It is this government's incompetence and this House leader's incompetence that have caused any logjams. They failed to introduce bills in a logical order. They failed to call them in a timely fashion. He is the one who should be apologizing and maybe letting someone else speak every once in a while without calling it a filibuster.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague. I do not want to challenge him but to correct the record for people listening.

It is not just that the government is pushing through Bill C-7; what it has allowed to happen here is for the unelected, unaccountable Senate to rewrite the law of Canada so that people with depression will be able to ask to die in two years, and this Liberal government is supporting that. This is ignoring what Parliament stands for.

Parliament does the hard work. If members of Parliament went back to their constituents and said that instead of having suicide prevention or mental health programs, they would like to make it easier for people with mental illness to die, there would be an outcry. There would be headlines and there would be debate. That would be democratic. It is the fact that this Liberal government is using the unelected and unaccountable Senate to fundamentally change a basic principle of the right to life in this country that I find appalling, and the fact the Liberals want to rush it through the House.

### *Government Orders*

They say that we have obstructed; they are obstructing the democratic rights of this House.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question, and I would say that the Liberals are doing more than just obstructing. This is perhaps the most serious matter that we will ever consider, and it certainly is the most serious matter that we will have considered in my almost 10 years as an elected official.

I agree with the member. The government and unelected senators are saying to people in our lives, many of whom we have struggled to keep alive and to keep from making the wrong choice of taking their own lives, that if they want to take their own lives, there is now a system in place for it. Instead of standing up and increasing supports for people with mental health problems, instead of increasing supports for people with disabilities and different abilities, they are saying, "I know you are not at the end of your life, that there is no prospect of you dying, but now there is, because an unelected Senate has taken away the protections for people who have mental illness in this country."

For the government to rush the bill through and to accept those terrible amendments is an affront to this democratically elected place, and the government truly should be ashamed of itself and for what this bill will do. There will come a time when future parliamentarians will stand up and apologize for what is about to happen later today when we vote in favour. We Conservatives will not be voting in favour, but when this government votes to make it easy for mentally ill and disabled people to take their own lives, it is a tragedy.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

Before I begin, I would like to take a moment, on this national day of remembrance for the victims of COVID-19, to express my sympathy to everyone who lost a loved one during the pandemic, particularly our highly esteemed colleague from Trois-Rivières, Louise, whose sister Danielle died from this awful virus.

The pandemic has hit us from all sides. People of every generation will have to live with consequences we have not even fully grasped yet. Unfortunately, the most vulnerable people, our seniors, have borne the brunt of the crisis.

It has now been more than a year since the people on the front lines and the entire population of Quebec joined together in a constant struggle to contain the pandemic so that we could stop counting victims and finally return to some semblance of normalcy.

### *Government Orders*

Today, I will take a moment to recognize all of these people, the paramedics, health care workers, delivery drivers, police officers, grocery store employees and others who have been providing essential services to the public during the pandemic. To them, we offer our warmest thanks.

We are here today to talk about Bill C-24, which has two major components. The first is aimed at making tourists who travelled south or elsewhere ineligible for the \$1,000 benefit for people who have to quarantine. The second is aimed at extending EI regular benefits to 50 weeks.

The EI system as we know it today has failed to protect workers not only in times of crisis, but in normal times as well. The current crisis has exposed all of the flaws in the EI system, which needs a complete overhaul. The Bloc Québécois has been working toward this goal for two decades now, but unfortunately, every bill we have proposed has died on the Order Paper. If we want to help people, we need to do something different.

My predecessor fought all of these battles a few years ago. She significantly improved the lives of her constituents, particularly with respect to EI. I salute her. I too went into politics because I wanted to improve people's lives, and this issue is very important.

I hope that the employment insurance program will be improved, and I am certain that we can do so during this Parliament. Right now, as we all know, the plan is unfair, because it offers only 15 weeks of sickness benefits. We have no more control over our health than we do over whether a factory shuts down or stays open.

I must admit that the EI system has gotten better in recent decades. I will admit that. However, there are still a few things that need changing, and we need to make the system fair. Despite having paid into the system, most Canadians are not eligible for benefits. Let us focus on the word "insurance" in employment insurance. Is that not something that should help us in difficult situations, other than a fire or an event beyond our control? Employment insurance should live up to its name.

• (1240)

Everyone agrees that losing a job or getting sick makes life difficult. I am speaking on behalf of dozens of residents in Laurentides—Labelle who came knocking on my door telling me such things as, "I have not completed my chemotherapy treatment, I only have one week of benefits left, I did not choose to be sick". We saw that before parliament was prorogued for the nth time.

To fix the situation until September 25, 2021, we need to fix it permanently. The most humane thing to do for a sick person is to vote in favour of Bill C-265, introduced by my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît. We owe it to all of the Émilie Sansfaçons in Quebec and Canada. We must never forget her smile, her strength, her courage and her engagement. We are thinking of her.

The other component of the bill concerns the \$1,000 for travellers' mandatory quarantine. In my opinion, it is high time we took action, because we have been talking about it for months now, or at least the Bloc Québécois has.

We did not see any type of bill until January 20. However, we immediately noticed that it was not retroactive to January 3. The

Bloc Québécois therefore asked that it be revised and made retroactive to October 2. Taxpayer money should not be used to pay for a post-vacation vacation. The tireless leader of our political party, the hon. member for La Prairie, told the government that the Bloc Québécois would support the bill if it were made retroactive to October 2. Then, what happened? Radio silence for two months.

The Bloc Québécois wanted the government to move forward, but carefully. As my colleague would say, it is important to remain vigilant in times of crisis. Unfortunately, that is not what the government did. That is why the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of Bill C-24. We have actually been in favour for months. I suppose that, once again, the Liberals should have listened to us. Opposition parties are useful. Opposition parties ensure a democratic process. We need to take the time, listen, think and act; in a word, collaborate.

[English]

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech was very thoughtful. During her speech she mentioned some of her constituents, which shows she is actually listening to her constituents.

We are here today debating Bill C-24. One of the concerns I have is that it is \$12 billion. It seems like the government, over and over again, tries to push through its initiatives, only to bumble it and have to come up with a fix.

One of the things I am hearing from my constituents, especially young people, is that they are worried about the future and the budget. The government has not put forth a budget in over two years. Every single country around the world, every province and the national assembly has been able to put forward a budget, so Canadians can have an idea of what their future is going to look like.

I know the member will be supporting this bill, but what are her concerns about the fact that the government is holding the budget secret? Where we will be moving forward to without one?

• (1245)

[Translation]

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

As I just said, we need to collaborate. To do that, we must do the work and know what is going on so that we can make proposals and adjustments. Right now, we are not ready for an economic recovery.

I did not talk about possible solutions earlier. I was at the Standing Committee on Finance, and when the question came up about what we need to do to ensure a viable economy after the pandemic, the answer was that we need a natural stabilizer. That natural stabilizer is to preserve people's ability to contribute to the economy.

The bill tabled by my colleague, which we need to support, will certainly help people contribute to the economy. It should of course be incorporated into the budget that we are still waiting to see.

[English]

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I had the opportunity earlier today to work on some important advancements pushing the government to take action on ALS. I admire her greatly, and I like working with her quite a bit.

I would like to follow up on the question my colleague from the Conservative party just asked about us not having a budget. We have also not been able to see certain legislation come forward, and we have seen a real reluctance from the government to bring forward the truth and reconciliation day legislation, the net-zero legislation, and even the legislation around UNDRIP. We have had limited time to debate such important legislation.

I am wondering if she could comment on why she feels the government is so hesitant to bring forward legislation that is so important to Canadians.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my esteemed colleague for her comment.

She just raised another reason many people want to improve the well-being of the community. I daresay that we all want that. We must work to improve lives. To improve lives, we need to plan. To plan, we need to know exactly what the most pressing problems are.

I completely agree with my colleague that there are a huge number of bills that have not been brought forward in the House. It is urgent that the government act. It will have to start by proposing a recovery plan and tabling a budget, and then negotiating while at the same time listening to the other parties' suggestions.

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her speech.

[English]

My question relates back to the previous speaker and the need for a national strategy. Yesterday I was in debate with the parliamentary secretary for transport about what Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan and South Korea have done to combat COVID-19 with a national strategy. His response was that the Liberals did not want to start a constitutional crisis.

Does the hon. member think that creating a national strategy to work with the provinces to achieve a common ground and a common strategy, rather than this piecemeal approach we have had, would cause a constitutional crisis? Does she think the Government of Quebec would work with the federal government to ensure we have protected our citizens?

Twenty-one thousand people have died. We have ruined our economy. We have spent hundreds of billions of dollars—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are out of time.

### Government Orders

[Translation]

The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Mr. Speaker, I think that members know exactly what the Bloc Québécois's stance on this is.

To manage a pandemic, we must make use of each province's strengths. This is what we have been asking for and will continue to ask for. We need a permanent 35% health transfer. The government needs to let the provinces and Quebec handle their own affairs, because many of them have demonstrated that they are at the forefront when it comes to protecting the health and safety of their residents.

I will say it once again: the health transfers will be non-negotiable.

• (1250)

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity today to express my sympathy and condolences to all those who have lost loved ones during this pandemic. Today is a national day of remembrance in Quebec, and we are carrying a white rose in their honour.

Let me remind members what Bill C-24 is about. It extends the maximum number of weeks of EI benefits to 50 weeks for people who apply by September 25, 2021, and makes vacationers ineligible for Canada recovery sickness benefits while they are quarantining after returning to Canada. These benefits provide \$500 a week for two weeks, for a total of \$1,000, which is why we keep referring to it as \$1,000.

This bill fixes a loophole in the legislation and clarifies that this benefit was intended for emergencies, not to give vacationers a bonus when they return to Canada. This change corrects an injustice, a flaw in the legislation.

The Bloc Québécois is happy. We have been looking forward to this bill, and throughout the fall, we called for it to be made retroactive to October 2 rather than January 3. We know that Quebecers travel at Christmas and over the school break, so we felt it was important that the bill be retroactive to October 2. Since the government listened to reason and is making the bill retroactive to October 2, the Bloc Québécois is going to support it.

However, I still have a little twinge of regret, because it would have been easy for the government to add a small amendment to the Employment Insurance Act.

Only regular benefits are taken into account in this bill. Those who are currently unemployed, who until now were entitled to 26 weeks of benefits, know that parliamentarians are going to vote today to pass a bill. I am sure that it will pass and that the number of weeks of benefits to which they are entitled will increase to 50 weeks.

### *Government Orders*

However, I am sad to see that those who are sick, those who currently devoting all of their energy to fighting cancer or some other serious disease, got some very bad news today, because Bill C-24 does not cover EI sickness benefits.

I would like to use my time to speak on behalf of those who are doing everything they can to express themselves and be heard by the government when they say that 15 weeks is not good enough. When people are battling illness, they need more than 15 weeks of EI sickness benefits to cover the cost of living.

Today I would like to speak on behalf of the father of Émilie Sansfaçon. On February 18, he wrote an open letter in the papers for all of us to read. The letter was addressed to his MP, who happens to be the President of the Treasury Board. I would like to quote parts of the letter because it really says so much.

We are not talking about parliamentarians here. We are talking about a father who went through this with his daughter, a woman who battled illness for nearly two years before succumbing. This father talks about how she had no income while fighting her illness because the 15-week benefit period was not enough.

Here is an excerpt from his three-page letter:

Sadly, this issue has been dragging on since 2009. Mr. [President of the Treasury Board], how can you keep ignoring the more than 617,000 Canadians who called for this change in Marie-Hélène Dubé's petition?

Marie-Hélène Dubé is a cancer survivor who worked hard for years to make all parliamentarians from all parties understand the importance of amending the Employment Insurance Act.

● (1255)

How can you ignore the 11 bills that have been introduced on this? How can you ignore the promise by the [Prime Minister] and [the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion] to do better than the proposed 26 weeks?

Just recently, on February 16, the minister said in the House of Commons that her government would soon amend the bill on employment insurance to increase the number of weeks to 26. It is truly hard for Mr. Sansfaçon to hear that since that is what was already promised in the Speech from the Throne and the budget will be tabled soon.

We are not fighting to get 26 weeks. We are saying that the government needs to listen to workers who are sick because they need to receive benefits for more than 26 weeks.

Émilie Sansfaçon's father made an appeal, writing a letter to the President of the Treasury Board, who, again, is the member for his riding:

Sir, in October 2019, I personally and publicly appealed to you during a pre-election meeting. Tersely, yet with the emotion the situation called for, you said your government intended to grant 26 weeks of sickness benefits "to show that it is listening, changing and improving".

This response was extremely insulting to many workers who are currently fighting for their lives. It has been well documented that 26 weeks is not enough and, if I have any time left, I will indicate exactly how many weeks are needed.

The Bloc Québécois wants to ensure fairness by giving individuals who are sick the same entitlements as workers, namely, 50 weeks of benefits. Will 100% of sick workers who are fighting for

their lives take all 50 weeks? No, but they should have the opportunity to take them if they need them. This is what must be put in place.

We need to convince the government and the members opposite that the 26 weeks publicly announced by various ministers that will be included in the upcoming budget are not enough at this time. I would even say that it is insulting and demeaning to workers who are fighting for their lives.

I would like to quote Émilie Sansfaçon's father on last time:

The 26 weeks you are proposing are unrealistic. Even the Canadian Cancer Society has pointed out in a press release that the majority of EI recipients are off work for an average of 41 weeks.

The 41-weeks figure comes from an analysis by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, someone who understands numbers. He essentially said that 59% of workers diagnosed with a serious illness needed at least 41 weeks before they were able to return to work. Treatments and drugs have become so effective that today people are able to survive cancer and other illnesses and live longer lives. In 59% of cases, these people need 50 weeks of sickness benefits.

In closing, I would like to point out that the Quebec Cancer Foundation agrees that people need at least 50 weeks of sickness benefits.

The best way to reassure everyone is to support my Bill C-265, which will be examined on April 19. The government missed an opportunity with Bill C-24, but it will have another chance on April 19 by supporting my bill.

● (1300)

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I know that she has been working incredibly hard on this file.

A very touching video on this subject has been shared in recent weeks. I also heard from a great-aunt who had cancer that recurred twice. She had to go back to work against the advice of her doctor because she had no more income. She is not the only one in this situation. Many others are in the same boat.

We must show some humanity and empathy. As my colleague said, the government has a second chance to get it right by supporting her bill. I would like her to tell us again why it is so important to her.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

It is true that this cause is very important to me because it is about equity and correcting an injustice. We are talking about workers who left their jobs not for the fun of it, but because of a serious illness. We must give them the assurance and the financial means to make rent, buy food and medications, and fight the illness so they can return to work.

Statistics show that 59% of workers need an average of 41 weeks off work. The Bloc Québécois believes it is very reasonable to extend EI sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 50 weeks.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, her interventions and her commitment to this issue, which is vital, in every sense of the word, to thousands of people in Quebec and across Canada.

The NDP has long supported expanding EI sickness benefits to 50 weeks. We have spoken about this a lot and asked a lot of questions. This is an issue we will continue to support because it is the right thing, the humane thing and the compassionate thing to do.

However, I have to wonder why the Liberal government stubbornly wants to cap these benefits at 26 weeks, when science, evidence and experience shows that people need at least 40 to 45 weeks, and sometimes even 50 weeks. Why do the Liberals have such a hard time listening to people?

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite Patrie, who I know cares a lot about this issue. That is a very good question.

Perhaps the government is listening to the employers' lobby, which is concerned. It is important to point out that the EI program is not a subsidy and is not funded by the government. It is funded by employers and workers. It is also possible that insurance companies are calling the minister to say that this is going to cost them a lot of money.

I think it is a matter of balance. The idea is that our EI program fairly and equitably gives workers what they need to overcome their illness. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said it, and it has been documented. The most compelling evidence comes from Marie-Hélène Dubé, a cancer survivor, who collected a record number of signatures, over 615,000, from Quebecers and Canadians who also believe that this is necessary, who are telling the government to open its eyes because people need 50 weeks of benefits to overcome an illness.

[English]

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I brought this up a bit earlier. We are debating Bill C-24 today, but it seems that we always get a reactive measure by the government. It seems that it is not doing anything proactive. I mentioned to one of the member's colleagues earlier that the government does not seem to have a plan for coming out of the pandemic.

The Bloc has been very good at looking into where the challenges are, and the member mentioned employment insurance and health care. How important is it for the government to bring forth a plan to get out of the challenges we are having in the pandemic and put forth a budget as soon as possible?

### Government Orders

[Translation]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He is right.

Right now, they are in crisis management mode, but with vaccines coming on line fast, it is important to plan and prepare for recovery. The Bloc Québécois has given that a lot of thought. We are hoping for a truly green, feminist and eco-friendly recovery that takes Quebec's interests into account.

My colleague can count on the Bloc Québécois because we have already made suggestions, and all we need to do now is make sure people know about them. If the government listens to us, Quebec will be well served.

• (1305)

[English]

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have said this before in this place, but I seriously doubt that the government has a plan to get Canada out of the pandemic. I listened to the question that came from my colleague earlier, and the question is legitimate: Does the government have a plan, or has it been reactive rather than proactive? I believe there is a serious problem, and I believe the government does not have a plan. I wish I was joking.

Bill C-24 is another bill in the long line of bills that I have started calling “fixer-upper bills”. I am sure members can guess what I am implying here, but in case they cannot, I will explain.

The government, in its mad rush to get supports out to Canadians last summer, passed a ton of bills that, even more so than usual for the government, were poorly written messes that did not properly establish programs. The CEWS, for example, is the poster child for this problem with the government. It took the government over three tries to get this program to a usable state. Let us imagine that. If we were playing baseball, for example, the umpire would have called the government out by now. The government is—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I want to interrupt the member momentarily. We have a point of order from the hon. member for Oshawa.

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, I always hate to interrupt a colleague, but I think the member was so excited to speak to the bill that he forgot to mention he will be splitting his time with the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for Oshawa. We will confirm with the hon. member for Edmonton Manning if that was his intention.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Oshawa. Indeed, I will be splitting my time with my colleague.

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As I said, if we were playing baseball, the umpire would have called the government “out” by now. That is not all. Even CERB, EI, had multiple changes, which is the main part of this bill after all. Canadians have been relying on those programs over the course of the pandemic. It is no surprise that the Liberals did not have them down pat. One would think that by now they would get it, or at least after three or four tries, but it seems we are still dealing with the same dilemma.

We know how the government loves to put things off to the last minute, and it has become what I call a “piecemeal” government. We see this again, with these new suggestions for implementation. Am I shocked? Of course, not. The mentality of the government to leave everything to the last minute, even its agenda, is well and good during normal years. We experienced that in the 42nd Parliament, and we see the same thing happening right now.

However, now we are dealing with a pandemic. Everything is an emergency and is taken with a different approach. We must be aware that we cannot do things the regular way. This is a time when governments need to be more proactive and determine how to get the best results from the best plans. The only words that come to my mind with what the government has come up with now is “not good enough”.

While obviously I do not agree with my Liberal colleagues on most things, I would have thought that we would agree that Canadians needed us to get this right the first time. This is the bottom line. We need to get it right the first time, not the second, third or fourth time. I have no idea why this is happening.

Now we have the highest unemployment rate in the G7. It is not acceptable for the government to get those programs wrong again and again. The government has to stop to think about what is going on and why we are facing these experiences again and again every time it comes near a new law or legislation.

As of January 2021, 213,000 Canadians lost their jobs due to the pandemic. That number is huge. Those 213,000 people are relying on us to get this bill right and get proper legislation passed that will serve them and help them carry on with their lives. Canadians do not expect us to keep screwing it up, not the first time, the second time or the third time, nor leave it to the very last minute by not planning properly.

The failures add up. For example, high school students cannot have money now for university. University students cannot find jobs after they graduate or pay for their tuition. Young Canadians who are looking to start their careers are facing barriers as tall as the CN Tower. New Canadians, who only arrived in our country last year or this year, are also struggling to find jobs and starting their lives here.

• (1310)

What has the Liberal government been doing all this time? It has not been getting support programs right the first time; it has not been getting it right the second time; and the money, of course, was delayed getting out the door. After all, it takes four months just to send Bill C-14 to the finance committee and now we find out that we do not have a budget this March either. It has been two years

without a budget. This has broken the record as far as how we do finance in the country.

We have seen everything come in at the last minute. Last minute does not come without mistakes. Last minute does not come with proper results.

We know what the government has been doing. It has been sitting back, twiddling its thumbs and introducing bills that, honestly, Canadians never asked for and certainly do not want at this time, such as Bill C-22 and Bill C-19. Instead of debating bills on which Canadians are relying, ones that would fix programs that Canadians have been counting on getting fixed, the government has been debating, for example, a bill that would prepare the government to call an election during a pandemic and a bill that would lessen the penalties for violent offender rather than the bills that can support Canadians to get jobs, to get their lives in order and, of course, to get the economy back in order.

It is a very dark picture. It is very sad that Canadians do not get the support they need, but criminals, for example, face lesser penalties. The PMO is clearly lives in some sort of bizarre world to think that this is the way to go.

That is just begging the umpire to point to the government and say, “You are out”. I seriously cannot reiterate enough just how much of a disappointment this has been. The government does not have a plan for economic recovery. The support programs that the Liberals created have been without economic recovery. The programs have to be amended time and time again and that delay causes Canadians to suffer because it takes longer now to get needed support out to them. The list goes on and on.

Canadians cannot afford to wait around for the Liberals to finally get the programs in working order. They cannot afford to wait for vaccines to trickle in slower than a snail. They cannot afford to wait for the government to finally present us with a plan so our country and our fellow Canadians can start to recover from the effects of this pandemic. Canadians simply cannot wait.

When the government waffles and delays for months then suddenly introduces the bill, trying to rush it along, it is simply not right. It means we get poorly created programs that need to be taken back to the drawing board. It means there is a lack of transparency and accountability that we would normally afford a bill. It means that Canadians get stuck with an even longer—

• (1315)

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are at the end of our 10 minutes.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened intently to the last two Conservatives speak and neither of them spoke to the substance of this bill. The bill is an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act. All the Conservatives did was talk about the failings of the government. It is as though they were sent here to talk about whatever they wanted, but just not about Bill C-24.

I listened to the member for Chilliwack—Hope for 10 minutes. He spent a total of 15 seconds talking about the bill. That member did the same thing. If any Canadian is watching the deliberations today, it is quite clear why this is being passed so quickly. It is because nobody, including Conservatives, has anything to contribute to the actual substance of the bill.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Mr. Speaker, when there is no substance in what the government is doing and how the government has been handling this whole thing, how can the Liberals expect anyone to talk about it? There is no substance there for us to talk about.

That is what has happened right now. The Liberals are leaving everything to the last minute. They have been dragging their feet on everything. In business, they just correct the mistakes they make.

Therefore, if the Liberals were to trace their mistakes in the last year on every bill, what do they expect the opposition to say? They need to look at themselves and ask why they are introducing bills without substance. Every time, they confuse Canadians and they confuse policy-makers. That is why we are having this problem. That is why the member opposite is hearing opposition members speak in that fashion.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about the supports for students. He would know that there are a number of post-secondary institutions in my riding, like the University of Alberta, which has suffered pretty devastating cuts from the provincial government recently. However, one of the things I have seen with the federal administration is that it has promised supports for students and recent graduates, but has not brought them forward.

In the fall economic update, the Liberals talked about the bare minimum of taking interest off of student loans, and they still have not done that. They agreed to my unanimous consent motion over 100 days ago to put a moratorium on loan repayments for recent graduates. They, of course, have not done that either.

Could the member talk a little about the supports he sees for students and things we really have not seen the government do?

• (1320)

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Mr. Speaker, of course, the University of Alberta campus is in her riding, and there are many students there.

The member is absolutely right. We have seen virtue signalling from day one by the government. The Liberals make those big announcements, but, again, there is no substance. They are empty promises. If we cannot provide help and support to students now, when will we do it? If we cannot provide or offer them any certainty about the future, about jobs after they graduate or about the sup-

port they need to pay their tuition, how can we expect that the future for our future generations will be in the right order?

The member is absolutely right. The notion for the government is big promises, no delivery. It over-promises and under-delivers. It is unfortunate that this is the way, and only the government has answers for that.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on the intervention of the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, which I found it very strange. The Conservatives are talking about jobs and economic recovery. This bill exists because there are no jobs and there is no timeline for economic recovery. Therefore, I am not quite sure how he sees those as unrelated.

My question for my hon. Conservative member and colleague is this. There is a sunset date in Bill C-24 of September 25, 2021, so these benefits would not exist after that, yet there is no plan on how to get the jobs back. These benefits would not be needed. Could the hon. member comment on that?

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Mr. Speaker, again, we are facing the same symptoms. All these announcements are in place, but there is really no timeline for any of them to be met. This is just another sign of virtue signalling by the government. The Liberals are preparing for an election and they are not going to implement any of those ideas or bills. They are going to let the bills die through time. Unfortunately this is the new way of doing business in the country as far as government services and business go, and that is very sad.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is such a great day to be debating in the House of Commons. Before I begin, I want to give a big shout-out. I have been in Ottawa for a while, and I think all House of Commons staff are doing an excellent job of keeping us fed and making sure that our system works for the well-being of Canadians. I really felt that this week. They are doing a great job.

Now I will get to Bill C-24.

Bill C-24 would increase the maximum number of weeks available to workers through EI, with up to a maximum of 50 weeks for claims established between September 27, 2020, and September 25, 2021. It would also change rules for self-employed workers who have opted into the EI program to access special benefits. This legislation would allow them to use their 2020 earning threshold of \$5,000, compared with the previous threshold of \$7,555. Also, it would fix the Liberal-caused loophole in the Canada recovery sickness benefit for international leisure travellers.

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The Conservative Party is supportive of Bill C-24. These changes are necessary and long overdue. We must get help to Canadians in need whose jobs have been eliminated as a result of the government-mandated restrictions and closures in response to the pandemic. Lockdowns are still in place in many parts of the country, and businesses cannot get back to normal even though they are working incredibly hard to do so.

My constituents in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon are frustrated. They cannot go to church. They cannot earn an income the way they want to. They cannot live their lives the way they want to either.

The Conservatives' track record in this Parliament is strong. We have been behind pandemic assistance for Canadians throughout the entire COVID-19 period. We supported Bill C-13 one year ago, in March 2020. It brought in the Canada emergency wage subsidy for small businesses, a one-time additional payment under the GST/HST tax credit, temporary additional amounts to the Canada child benefit, a 25% reduction in required minimal withdrawals from registered retirement income funds, and the Canada emergency response benefit.

Last April, we supported Bill C-14 and Bill C-15, which improved the wage subsidy and implemented the Canada emergency student benefit. In July it was Bill C-20, to extend the wage subsidy. In September it was Bill C-4, for a CERB extension, the Canada recovery benefit, the Canada recovery sickness benefit and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit. In November it was Bill C-9, the emergency rent subsidy and wage subsidy expansion.

The Conservatives have been there to support Canadians every step of the way. What we are not supportive of, though, is the Liberal government's blatant disregard for parliamentary process, their lack of respect for Canadian democracy and their incredibly poor ability to manage the legislative agenda of the House to ensure that we can move past the pandemic.

Two days ago, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, who is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, popped into the HUMA committee and table dropped a substantive and constrictive motion for a prestudy of Bill C-24. Neither the text of the motion nor its intention was shared in advance. He ignored the proactive efforts of my colleague, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, who had reached out to him as soon as Bill C-24 was tabled in the House.

The deadline at the end of the month, which the Liberals are trying to beat, is not some surprise that was sprung on them. To further illustrate that the right hand of the government does not know what the left hand is doing, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul had to direct the member for Windsor—Tecumseh to pick up the phone and talk to his House leader during committee because the motion he was attempting to ram through was no longer necessary. We had come to an agreement outside of his ham-fisted efforts.

Cross-party collaboration is more than possible. Think of all the time that could have been saved if the parliamentary secretary had attempted to engage himself in that process with committee members.

• (1325)

The Liberals love to complain that the opposition is holding up important legislation, yet here we are, in March 2021, debating necessary updates to legislation from September 2020. The Liberals knew for months that benefits would be expiring, but they failed to act until the last minute. They have repeatedly missed the mark on legislation for emergency supports, leaving thousands of Canadians behind.

A key component of this legislation is addressing the incredibly flawed Canada recovery sickness benefit. Because of the Liberals' disrespect for Parliament and their poor legislative drafting, a loophole was created that allows international leisure travellers to receive the CRSB during their quarantine. This is completely unacceptable. The CRSB is for individuals who must miss work because of COVID-19, not for subsidizing the quarantine period of international leisure travellers. This oversight is a direct result of the government's rushing legislation through Parliament because of its prorogation. It is outrageous that the Liberals waited months to fix their mistake.

If the government tried implementing the transparency it espouses to employ, so much headache would have been avoided. For instance, if the Liberals had tabled a federal budget at the beginning of March, this would have ceased to be an issue entirely. There is even a precedent by the government for including employment insurance updates in federal budget legislation. In 2018, the government proposed amendments to the Employment Insurance Act to implement a number of reforms related to the extension of parental benefits.

We have not seen a federal budget in 723 days. This is the longest period in Canadian history that we have been without one.

Even setting aside our criticisms, we cannot ignore how the non-partisan Parliamentary Budget Officer has repeatedly called out the government for its lack of fiscal transparency. In a PBO report issued on November 4, 2020, on supplementary estimates (B), we found out that the Department of Finance, which under Bill Morneau had been issuing biweekly updates to the finance committee during the first month of the COVID-19 pandemic, stopped providing this information once Parliament was prorogued and Morneau had resigned. We are talking about tens of billions of taxpayer dollars heading out the door under the guise of COVID relief measures, and the government has revealed precious little about where these dollars are going.



From the same November 4 report, the PBO underscored that our role as parliamentarians is being obfuscated and obstructed by the government. As the report notes, “While the sum of these measures is significant”, some \$79.2 billion, of which 91.5% was related to COVID spending, “the amount of information that is publicly available to track this spending is lacking, thus making it more challenging for parliamentarians to perform their critical role in overseeing Government spending and holding it to account.”

There is no publicly available list of all federal COVID-19 spending measures. There is no consistency in the reporting on the implementation of these measures. There is less and less information being provided transparently to parliamentarians and the PBO. The government could not do a better job of keeping its finances secret if it provided everyone in the House with blindfolds.

However, to its credit, the government has made some efforts to provide additional financial information. As the PBO noted in its February 24, 2021, report on the supplementary estimates (C), “Notable improvements include a complete list of Bills presented to Parliament to authorize spending for COVID-19 related measures”, which is information anyone could find on LEGISinfo, “and a reconciliation table between the Fall Economic Statement 2020 and the Estimates documents”. Still, as the PBO reminded us in February, “The frequency at which the Government provides an updated list of COVID-19 measures in one central document...and the inconsistency to which actual spending data on COVID-19 measures is made publicly available remain areas of concern.”

These are baby steps, but bigger leaps are needed from the government when it comes to fiscal transparency. We as parliamentarians depend on the government to provide us with accurate and timely information about federal finances. We cannot do our work of keeping the government accountable for its spending choices if it does not respect us enough to provide the necessary information to allow me and all of my colleagues to do our jobs effectively.

• (1330)

Again today, it is up to the opposition to correct the continued mistakes of the government. This is disrespectful to us as parliamentarians, it is disrespectful to this hallowed institution and it is disrespectful to the Canadian people, for whose tax dollars we are ultimately responsible.

**Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a member of the HUMA committee, I would like to address some of the allegations that were raised. We often hear the Conservatives in particular and the opposition in general complain that government members on committees are puppets of the centre. However, when we act independently and in faithful ways with integrity to move committee business forward, we are told we should be checking in with the centre regarding the motions we present and the actions we take to process the business of Parliament. This is hypocritical and contradictory in a way, but I will let the opposition explain the inconsistencies.

When opposition members, in good faith, present us with a problem, why are they angry with us when we present the solution? I appreciate that timetables are urgent here, but critiques are much easier to lob than solutions. Solutions require drafting legislation

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and fitting it into a fiscal framework to make sure issues work. When they present us with a challenge to address, why are they mad when we address the issue? Why does the complaint suddenly turn to timetables instead of the fundamental principle at play?

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, what is unfortunate is that parliamentary secretary responsible for Bill C-24 is not standing up in the House and debating me on the very legislation he is meant to be responsible for.

• (1335)

**Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on a metaphor that our colleague from Edmonton Manning introduced. He described Bill C-24 as another “fixer-upper” piece of legislation. I have personally lived in fixer-uppers and my family has embarked on a renovation project, to continue with that metaphor, but we did so with a budget.

Can my colleague comment on whether a budget document, properly presented to the House and passed by it, might help the government in presenting future legislation that would not require so many fixes?

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, indeed, like a lot of members of the House, I look forward to when the Government of Canada tables a federal budget so that the corresponding accountability that comes with a budget, and the fiscal planning that goes along with that, are presented to Canadians. Then they will have an idea of how their federal taxpayer dollars are being spent and what plans are actually in place to get our economy going and get people back to work.

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Mr. Speaker, EI reforms are long overdue. This is something we need to do, and to do permanently, not just temporarily.

Liberal and Conservative governments have used the EI fund as a surplus slush fund, and I am curious as to whether the member thinks the fund should be completely independent so that money paid into it by workers is insurance money that can only be used by workers. That way, we could expand programs and make them more accessible to all those who could really use help through EI.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith that the way funds from employment insurance have been used by previous governments should not happen. Money put into EI by Canadians should be for Canadian workers when they need it, and if there are surplus funds, the money should be reinvested to support the fund when times are bad.

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[Translation]

**Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

What does he think of the proposal put forward by my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît to extend EI sickness benefits to 50 weeks on an ongoing basis beyond September 2021?

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois for the question.

We are looking at such things in committee right now. I hope that the hon. member can join us during this study to talk about extending special benefits.

[English]

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is always great to rise here in the House, virtually at this time, and represent the wonderful folks from my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

I want to acknowledge that I am joining virtually from the traditional territory of the Wyandot, Anishinabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. I will be splitting my time with the learned member for Kingston and the Islands.

We all know that things are getting better, and as things continue to get better we can continue to support Canadians, including the many individuals still impacted by COVID-19 in my riding. The bill before us, Bill C-24, would make sure Canadians continue to get the support they need to weather the pandemic. The proposed amendments to the Employment Insurance Act, the Canada Recovery Benefits Act and the Customs Act would build on the work we have already done from day one. I would like to use my remarks today to focus on what we have done.

There is no denying the past year has been hard for many workers in Canada. Employment went from the highest on record in early 2020 to the lowest, and while unprecedented federal investments helped to recoup many of those jobs, new waves of the virus and ensuing public health measures, such as lockdowns, have resulted in further losses.

During this difficult year our programs have been there to support Canadian workers and their families. With the co-operation of all members in the House, we suspended interest on student loans and created the Canada emergency response benefit. Through the CERB we were able to deliver, within weeks of the first shutdown, support to more than eight million Canadian workers at a time of great difficulty and uncertainty. We swiftly followed the CERB with the Canada emergency student benefit, as we saw students struggling to secure summer jobs and training opportunities. We provided payments to seniors, families and persons with disabilities, as well as extra supports for charities.

In September we began a transition for most workers who still needed support from CERB to a simplified employment insurance program. For workers who were not eligible for EI benefits, the recovery benefits are there for them. This includes the Canada recovery benefit, the Canada recovery caregiving benefit and the Canada recovery sickness benefit.

As the legislation before us focuses on the EI program, I would like to use some of my time to speak about the changes we made to it last summer. We made changes through interim orders so that more Canadians could have the hours they need to qualify for EI benefits. Today, the EI program provides claimants with a one-time credit of 300 hours for regular benefits and 480 hours for special benefits. This enables workers to establish their EI claim with as few as 120 insurable hours across Canada. This latter measure was retroactive to March 15, 2020, for maternity and parental benefits, which meant that new parents who welcomed a baby or adopted a child and were looking to transition early from the CERB to EI maternity or parental benefits could retroactively apply for those benefits.

The second thing we did is set a minimum unemployment rate of 13.1% for all EI economic regions. EI regions with a higher rate than 13.1% kept the higher rate. This provided eligible workers with a minimum of 26 weeks of regular EI benefits.

The third measure we undertook with the EI program was freezing the EI premium rate for two years, which has helped both employees and employers, especially in small businesses.

It is time for some fresh thinking to figure out an EI system that reflects how Canadians work now and how we can better support them, not only today, but for the future. Now, our government is looking at engaging with key stakeholders on options for permanent changes to the system, but in the meantime we will still need to deliver for Canadians, and that is what Bill C-24 would do.

A second wave of the virus, more stringent public health measures and the emergence of new variants have all contributed to an ongoing climate of uncertainty. Bill C-24 is here to ensure continued support for Canadians from coast to coast to coast whose employment has been affected by COVID-19. If passed, it would provide Canadians with additional support during these difficult times. With the bill before us today, we would increase the number of weeks of EI benefits available to a maximum of 50 weeks for claims that are established between September 27, 2020, and September 25, 2021. In addition, self-employed workers who have opted in to the EI program to access special benefits would be able to do so with a 2020 earnings threshold of \$5,000, compared to the previous threshold of \$7,555. This change would be retroactive to claims established as of January 3, 2021, and would apply through September 25, 2021.

As part of this proposed legislation, all international travellers who need to quarantine or isolate upon their return to Canada, including people returning from vacation, would be ineligible to receive support from any of the Canada recovery benefits for the period of their mandatory quarantine or isolation. These changes would be retroactive to October 2, 2020.

• (1340)

In parallel to this legislation, as was announced on February 19, 2021, we also intend to make regulatory amendments to increase the number of weeks available under the Canada recovery benefit and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit to 38 weeks from 26 weeks. In the same way, we could also increase the maximum number of weeks under the Canada recovery sickness benefit from two weeks to four weeks.

To ensure employees in the federally regulated private sector can access the proposed additional weeks of CRCB and CRSB without the risk of losing their jobs, the maximum length of leave related to COVID-19 under the Canada Labour Code would also be extended through regulations.

In conclusion, the pandemic is not over. Vaccines are here and coming in greater numbers. There will be eight million by the end of March and tens of millions by the end of June. By the end of September, there will be enough vaccines for all Canadians.

We need to continue to be there for Canadian workers and their families at this most difficult time. The bill before us would allow us to do just that.

• (1345)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and the announcements he presented.

We appreciate that the government has made headway on the Bloc Québécois's request to make the measure retroactive to October 3. We appreciate the government's openness on this and many other aspects.

However, we still wonder why the Liberals are refusing to open their hearts and listen to sick people who contributed to employment insurance. EI is a system where employers and employees make contributions to ensure that when someone is going through tough times, such as during an illness, they can benefit from a specific amount of time where they are covered and do not have to suffer financially.

I would like to know whether the government is considering this request regarding the “Émilie Sansfaçon” law.

[English]

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her questions pertaining to EI sickness benefits, which are not a part of Bill C-24. At this moment in time, the bill deals with the situation related to COVID-19 and how we can best continue to support Canadians through this pandemic, especially those in the really hard hit, high-contact sectors. We need to support families so they can pay rent and put food on the table for them and their families.

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Let us continue this conversation. Obviously, we need to look at a plethora of issues related to the EI system and how we best support Canadians as we recover and come out of the pandemic.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to clarify his comments that recent graduates were receiving a relief on interest payments on their student loans. From my understanding, that has not happened yet.

In addition to the government not following through with its support for my unanimous consent motion to call for a moratorium on loan repayments, and its failure to extend the Canadian student benefits, which was passed last summer, it has also not lived up to its own obligation to stop the interest on student loans that was announced in the fall update. Could the member clarify what he meant by saying that was in place?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the advocacy of my hon. colleague from Edmonton Strathcona for students across this country.

We introduced the Canada emergency student benefit during that time. That is what I was alluding to during my speech. Also, if the member looks back to the number of financial measures we introduced in our fall economic statement and prior budgets, the amount of support we have given to students across Canada regarding financial measures and increased research funding has literally been in the billions of dollars.

We have the backs of students, much like we have the backs of all Canadians, during this time and as we recover.

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Mr. Speaker, we are going to support Bill C-24 because it is important to help Canadians at this time.

I would like to know from the hon. member if he sees a need for permanent changes to improve the EI system and to create an independent fund that cannot be used as a slush fund by governments to pay down debt, to use against the deficit or other things, because this is an insurance program that workers and employers pay into. I would like to get his comments on whether he sees the need for those kinds of changes.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith for his question and interest in reforming and strengthening all social programs across our country, including the EI system. My belief is that all programs need to be continually reviewed to ensure their efficiency and *efficacité*, if I can use that word, so that they help Canadians from coast to coast.

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• (1350)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to start today by adding my voice to those who are observing it as the one-year anniversary of the World Health Organization's declaring a global pandemic of COVID-19. It was a Wednesday last year. I can remember it vividly. The next day, Thursday morning, the world seemed to change. I remember being in the government lobby. It was probably the last time I was there when it was packed full of people. I had this sense when I was leaving to go home that I would not be coming back for a while. Indeed, things have changed dramatically since then. Of course, we have to consider and remember all those lives lost as a result of this pandemic since then, but nonetheless, we are encouraged by what lies ahead with our being able to vaccinate our population and get back to life as normal.

This bill seeks to temporarily address the measures that are within the Employment Insurance Act to continue to help support Canadians and to continue to help them so that they have those supports they need as we get through the remainder of this pandemic. I am extremely proud to be part of not just a government, but indeed, a Parliament, that has come together on a number of occasions, quite often with very little discussion in advance, in the House. I know a lot went on behind the scenes, but we passed unanimous consent motions quite often to put supports into the hands of Canadians when they needed them the most. The CERB program, which later morphed into the EI changes that we made, and which of course are continuing to change in this legislation, is just one of those.

These were extremely anxious times for Canadians, especially at the very beginning of the pandemic when they were told to stay home and the programs had not yet been set up. To know that Parliamentarians came together to have Canadians' backs through it all and to give them the supports they needed really speaks a lot to the way we are able to come together when Canadians really needed it.

I realize that my time is extremely limited today, but I do want to add my support for this bill and for work that has to be done from this point forward to make sure that Canadians do get that support so they can see themselves through this pandemic and we can be more resilient and stronger when we come out of it on the other end.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, people are asking me over and over again when the government will come up with a budget, because it seems that we are being very reactive here, and people would like to see a plan moving forward to come out of this pandemic.

Would the hon. member enlighten us and let us know when that is going to happen?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I do not have the details any more than he does about when the budget will be released, but we do know that the government indicated last week that it was going to delay the budget slightly to get a full assessment and a full picture of what the economic circumstances are so that it can make sure that it invests in the right areas and puts money into the right sectors.

It is interesting that the question comes up in the context of much of the discussion and criticism from the other side of the House

about our not getting things right the first time. We now have a government saying that if we have to delay this for a few weeks, let us do that so we can get the right information and put the right plan together and present it to Canadians after having given it as much thought as possible.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the idea that we are often hearing that the government needs to have a plan. I would like the member's thoughts on how the Government of Canada, particularly the Prime Minister, has been focused on the pandemic right from the beginning. We have developed programs as a part of a plan, including things such as the CERB program that has helped over nine million Canadians, the Canada emergency wage subsidy program that has saved millions of jobs, the emergency rent subsidy, the emergency business account, the credit availability program and the regional relief programs. We have also been helping support charities and non-profits across the country, and supporting people with disabilities and our seniors, and giving students relief.

Why was it so important that we, as a government, be there for Canadians during this time?

• (1355)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, it was incredible to see programs set up in a remarkably short amount of time and implemented so quickly. We went from March 11, 2020, when the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic, to having money in the bank accounts of 5.4 million Canadians in about five weeks. That is absolutely remarkable by any measure. That was not just the government, but Parliament, because Parliament was there for Canadians then to make sure that this stuff passed and went very expeditiously and very quickly.

I will say, though, that I do find the following interesting. If we were to look back, hindsight being 20/20, it would be my bet that every member of the House would say that CERB was a really good idea. Let us not forget that at the time, the member for Carleton said, "No, we don't believe in these big government programs. We are Conservatives. We don't believe that." He said that back then.

It takes foresight to make good plans and this government had the foresight to put the plans in place. That is why we are able to give the supports that we did.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that must be why our side has had to correct so many of those plans as they have been coming out.

In response to the question by my colleague from Oshawa that we need a budget to have a solid plan, the government is still saying that it will be another couple of weeks as it needs to make sure it gets it right. There have been so many plans that were not right and today we are marking the one-year anniversary of the COVID situation.

How many more weeks, months or years is it going to take before we can have that budget and a solid plan?

*Statements by Members*

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, with all respect to my colleague across the way, he approved those plans. Parliament voted on that stuff and members approved it. Their job is to be accountable and have oversight. I trust that they did it to the best of their ability, but they missed it too. That is why we are back here working on this now. That is why we are going to get it right and deliver supports that Canadians need.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

The question is on the motion.

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

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow the motion to carry.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House?

I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Milton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last March our government issued a nationwide call to action to companies across Canada to help fight COVID-19. Over 6,500 businesses and manufacturers stepped up and answered that call. They retooled their facilities and increased production capacity, collected and donated existing supplies and equipment and combined resources to manufacture needed supplies more quickly.

To celebrate these tremendous efforts, next week we will be celebrating our first-ever “made in Canada” week to say thanks to those who joined the fight against COVID-19. A number of these businesses, I am very proud to say, are based right here in Milton, companies like Keter, an international plastic product maker that began producing reusable face shields that were donated to long-term care facilities, hospitals and fire stations across the province; or Conovey, a major conveyor manufacturer and supplier based right here in Milton that jointly developed a specialized portable UVC sterilizing system that contains a built-in conveyor to sterilize N95 masks, phones, trays and numerous other products.

These are just some of the examples of the incredible efforts made by businesses right across the country that have helped us throughout this pandemic, and to them, I simply say thanks.

• (1400)

### LITHUANIA

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today as Chair of the Canada-Nordic-Baltic Parliamentary Friendship Group in recognition of Lithuania's Day of Restoration of Independence.

On March 11, 1990, at 10:44 p.m., Lithuania threw down the manacles of communist oppression and declared its independence from the Soviet Union. Moments later, parliamentarians stood in the Seimas and sang their national anthem for the first time after five decades of occupation.

The Soviets responded harshly against the declaration and issued an ultimatum: Renounce independence or face the consequences. Lithuanians stood resolute and rejected Soviet demands, resulting in swift, retaliatory measures, including economic sanctions and a large-scale military invasion. Lithuania continued to resist and ultimately the Soviet Union recognized Lithuania's independence.

This year, 2021, marks the 31st anniversary of the Act of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania, which has served as a model and inspiration of freedom for other Soviet republics.

I am proud that Canada stood with Lithuania, never recognizing the Soviets' forceful occupation.

\* \* \*

### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Saint John—Rothesay has needed an infrastructure overhaul for over a decade. Under the previous government, essential infrastructure was allowed to fall into disrepair. Under our government's watch, federal investments in infrastructure for Saint John—Rothesay have doubled, but strategic investments in our waterfront such as the recently announced Fundy Quay require other essential infrastructure to support them.

That is why yesterday I was proud to announce a federal investment of \$15.5 million for the long overdue repair of our essential water-based infrastructure. With these smart investments, we have laid the groundwork not just for recovery but also for major economic development. I am now focused on recovery and growth, where Saint John—Rothesay will emerge ready to thrive post-pandemic.

Federal investments in the Fundy Quay, Port Saint John, our sea wall and Fort La Tour have already started to transform the Saint John waterfront, making our city a major attraction for developers, shipping commerce and visitors for generations to come.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***DANIELLE CHARBONNEAU**

**Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has been devastating our communities for a year now.

For me, it has been all too real because I lost my sister, Danielle Charbonneau. I will always remember how she shared her worries with me over the phone. Neighbouring residents were going away, never to return, but in spite of it all, she remained optimistic.

However, after a fall, she was transferred to a nearby hospital and diagnosed with COVID-19. One week later, she was gone. She never got to see her family again. Thanks to a devoted nurse, who held the phone up to my sister's ear so I could comfort her, I was with her during her last moments.

My story is just one of thousands.

May we never forget them.

\* \* \*

**RHÉAL CORMIER**

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe and the entire province of New Brunswick, I rise today to pay tribute to Rhéal Cormier, the first Acadian to have played baseball in the major leagues, who passed away this week at the age of 53.

From the moment he made his major league debut in 1991, which happened to be on National Acadian Day, he captivated Acadian people everywhere with his adventures on the world stage.

The pride of Saint-André-LeBlanc in New Brunswick, Rhéal was inducted into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame, and yet was always very humble about his achievements and his roots.

Through his perseverance and determination, he set an example for his community and inspired many people to always aim higher and pursue their grandest dreams.

I offer my sincere condolences to his family, loved ones and friends.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

*[English]***CLARENCE Palsky**

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are some people whose joyful energy announces their presence in a room before they say a word, and Clarence Palsky had that ability in spades.

Clare, as his family knew him, had an abundance of faith that soaked his character so fully that when one was in his presence, one could not help but feel peace in both his joy and his conviction. The loss of his life last week has been felt by thousands of people whose lives he touched for the better through his mission work, his generosity and his compassion.

His legacy lies not only in the positive impact of his life's work but in how he successfully imparted the very best of his character and his faith to each member of his family. In this I stand with profound gratitude for Clare and for his grandson, Sean; for the work Sean, his wife and parents have done to fight alongside me for our country; and for the brother that Sean has been to me for over 15 years.

To Sean, Brenda, and Debbie, we mourn with them the loss of their Clare. We also rejoice in the promise of his eternal life.

Rest easy, Grandpa Palsky.

\* \* \*

**WORLD PLUMBING DAY**

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 11th anniversary of World Plumbing Day, affording us the opportunity to reflect on how skilled trades play a significant role in maintaining the integrity of our water supplies and sanitation systems here in Canada.

The \$25 billion Canadian plumbing and mechanical contracting industry has never been more inundated with sanitation needs, domestic consumption of water and agricultural demands. The work of the skilled trades, especially in the plumbing industry, affords us all the chance to have safe water and sanitation systems in our communities, which are vital to our health and well-being. As we take extra precautions to protect ourselves from illness by washing hands and sanitizing areas where we live and work, let us stop and think about how much plumbing affects our daily lives.

I would like to recognize all the men and women in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge and throughout the country, as well as the Canadian Institute of Plumbing and Heating and the Mechanical Contractors Association of Canada, for their work and advocacy for the plumbing sector.

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**NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION**

**Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, our government proudly supported a motion to continue the debate on Bill C-5, a national day for truth and reconciliation. It is disappointing that unanimous consent was not reached to continue to advance this important piece of legislation, because the Conservative Party of Canada refused to agree, obstructing the passage of the motion and ultimately the bill.

This new national day of commemoration would honour first nations, Inuit and Métis survivors, their families and communities while raising more awareness among Canadians about the atrocities committed against indigenous people. September 30 builds on the grassroots momentum of Orange Shirt Day, which is already recognized as a day to remember the painful history and legacy of residential schools and move forward on a path toward reconciliation.

Reconciliation should not be partisan. The obstruction and political games must stop so that the House can advance important elements of reconciliation and the TRC's calls to action.

\* \* \*

#### ROLLI CACCHIONI

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we lost a leader in Kelowna—Lake Country, with the recent passing of Rolli Cacchioni.

Rolli and his wife Mary celebrated their 50th anniversary this year. Rolli had a long career as a teacher and principal. He was the president of every local teachers or principals association, and was a professor at UBC Okanagan. He was elected as a school trustee in 2005, was board chair for four years and served until his passing.

Rolli served on the City of Kelowna advisory planning commission, Kelowna Museums Society, Rutland Residents Association, Central Okanagan Bursary and Scholarship Society and, after retiring from long service on the board of Interior Savings Credit Union, a bursary was created in his name.

Rolli was a founding member of the Central Okanagan Sports Hall of Fame and museum. He coached hockey, rugby, soccer and was active in football, including with the Okanagan Sun.

Rolli had a big smile, big heart and big personality. He will be missed and I am sure he is teaching or coaching right now.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

#### KANATA—CARLETON

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we mark one year since the beginning of this pandemic, I stand today in the House to express my gratitude to the constituents of Kanata—Carleton and to all Canadians from coast to coast to coast for their dedication to their country and to each other.

Although this last year has been a most difficult period in the lives of many Canadians, we also have been witness to some amazing innovation as well as heartwarming gestures of generosity and support. Seeing these shining examples during a dark time helps all of us get through another day.

With warmer weather and millions of vaccines on the way, there are many reasons to be optimistic, but we have to remember those we have lost, those who are still suffering and those who have made sacrifices to help Canadians get through this together.

That is what the people of Kanata—Carleton and Canadians do and, together, we will continue the work of helping our neighbours, our families and our communities.

\* \* \*

#### DUFFERIN—CALEDON

**Mr. Kyle Seebach (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am always proud of the businesses and the people in Dufferin—Caledon, but I am especially proud these days. The lockdowns have been tough on businesses, yet in my riding they are rising to the occasion.

#### Statements by Members

Lucky Lime Clinic has set up a mitten exchange station right outside its office for anyone who has cold hands. In Bolton, Hugger Covers has donated over 5,000 masks to front-line workers and in Orangeville, Curry Mantra has been donating \$1 for every meal its serves to the local hospital, Headwaters Health Care Centre, and it gives away meals to needy families all the time. Down in the south part of my riding, Mint Leaf Restaurant has been giving food donations to needy families throughout the pandemic.

These businesses are doing this despite lockdowns and other restrictions that have harmed their business. They have gone above and beyond and they will continue to do it. I am so proud of the businesses and people in Dufferin—Caledon.

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#### COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on this day, as we remember all those who have been lost to, or in some way impacted by, the COVID-19 pandemic, let us also renew our commitment to assist those who still need our help, including those hardest-hit businesses, families and individuals who are struggling the most.

Yesterday, Conservatives secured the House's support for workers in sectors heavily impacted by COVID-19. Those sectors include hospitality, tourism, charities, airlines and small and medium-sized businesses. The success of our recent opposition day motion adds to our strong track record on this important subject. Canadian families, workers and businesses can count on us to support them.

Throughout this crisis, we have worked with the government to ensure needed programs and policies were adequately reviewed and revised to provide greater certainty and benefit. On this side of the House, Conservatives will continue to advocate for Canadians on what they need to not only survive this pandemic, but to achieve economic recovery on the other side. This is our duty and we are here for them.

\* \* \*

#### JOAN LEMOINE

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this year, the community of Parksville on Vancouver Island lost a local hero. Joan LeMoine was truly a force of nature. She was a consummate volunteer, generous with her time and endless energy and driven by a passion for helping others.

### Oral Questions

On her 90th birthday, the City of Parksville presented Joan with the key to the city, and declared July 6 Joan LeMoine Day in recognition of her service to others. Over the years, Joan served on the board of the Society of Organized Services and volunteered with the Caring for Community at Christmas program. She was an avid fundraiser for the Cops for Cancer campaign, Branch 49 of the Royal Canadian Legion, the Tim Hortons day camp for children with special needs, and the Oceanside Community Safety Volunteers. Her favourite line was, “Life: It is for living.” It was a testament to her capacity to bring goodness and vitality to everything she did and stood for.

Rest in peace, Joan. All those whose lives she touched will never forget her.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

[Translation]

### COVID-19 VICTIMS

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, his name was Stéphane. Everyone in Montérégie and the separatist movement knew him because, all his life, he devoted all of his energy to Quebec.

Stéphane is one of the thousands of Quebecers who was taken from us, either directly or indirectly, by the coronavirus. Had he not succumbed to COVID, he would have found a way to help combat it because that is what he did in life: help.

Like thousands of Quebecers who fell victim to this terrible virus, Stéphane did not get a proper goodbye, did not get a proper gathering where people could express their gratitude and friendship for him one last time. No, Stéphane was taken from us, and we were unable to mourn him properly, unable to thank him.

Let us take the time to do that today.

Thank you, Stéphane, for crossing our paths.

Thank you to all of those we loved and who loved us who were taken from us.

I will remember.

\* \* \*

[English]

### FIREARMS

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, small businesses have suffered since the onset of the pandemic. On top of punishing law-abiding firearms owners under the new bill, the Liberals are not interested in reimbursing small businesses for their investments. The new proposed firearms legislation will have a tremendous negative effect on small businesses such as sporting goods stores. Now, on top of the shutdowns affecting their businesses for a year, they will be saddled with stranded assets.

Instead of punishing criminals for the possession and distribution of illegal firearms that will continue to be used to commit violent crimes, once again law-abiding citizens and small businesses will be forced to bear the burden of this flawed, misguided legislation.

The government must put the interests of lawful Canadians and small businesses ahead of violent criminals.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### ST. PATRICK'S DAY IN VAUDREUIL—SOULANGES

**Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, although there will be no St. Patrick's Day parade in Hudson this year, the spirit of Irish generosity is alive and well in the Vaudreuil-Soulanges community.

[English]

This Saturday, March 13, Ken Doran and the Soulanges Irish Society are hosting Local Supporting Locals in support of our local restaurants and not-for-profits, which have all been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic over the last year. Five dollars from all take-out meals ordered from participating restaurants will go to benefit great organizations in our community, including Le Pont Bridging food bank, the Vaudreuil-Soulanges Palliative Care Residence, NO-VA Hudson and many others.

I invite everyone who can to place their orders and enjoy a delicious meal. If they are not hungry or already have dinner planned, they can show support by buying tickets to a benefit comedy extravaganza featuring Joey Elias, Abdul Butt, Rodney Ramsey, Fiona O'Brien, Kim Sullivan, Mitch Melnick and our community's very own Ted Bird, Tom Whalen and Samara O'Gorman.

To learn more, I invite all members of my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges to visit [localssupportinglocals.ca](http://localssupportinglocals.ca). *Sléinte.*

### TRIBUTES

**The Speaker:** Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand that there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence to recognize that it has been one year since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic and to remember those who lost their lives to COVID-19.

I invite all members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

## ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[English]

### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in 2018, the Privy Council told the Prime Minister that the ombudsman was not intended for sexual misconduct investigations.



The Prime Minister's Office knew three years ago that it had a duty to initiate an investigation. The Prime Minister did nothing for this woman who was serving her country. Why did the Prime Minister sit on an accusation of sexual misconduct for three years?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a government, we have always taken seriously any allegations or accusations of sexual misconduct. In every case, we have forwarded them for investigation to responsible authorities. It is not up to politicians to do those investigations. We need reliable, independent investigations, and that is why the Minister of National Defence referred the ombudsperson to the appropriate officials, who then were unable to follow up because they did not receive enough information.

We will continue to stand and ensure we are improving the processes so that any victim of harassment or assault is able to get the support they need.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when the allegations against the chief of the defence staff first surfaced, the Prime Minister claimed that he was not aware of the allegations. Yesterday the Prime Minister revealed that he was indeed aware, but not about the specifics of the allegations. He just told the House that he takes all allegations of sexual misconduct seriously, yet he did nothing for three years.

The women of our Canadian Armed Forces are looking for leadership. Will the Prime Minister accept responsibility for his delay in acting on their behalf?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, throughout my time in politics, we as a party and I as a leader have always taken seriously any allegations or accusations and ensured that they were followed up on appropriately.

That is what happened in this case. The Minister of National Defence instructed the ombudsperson to go to the appropriate independent authorities to follow up on those issues, and that is something my office was aware of. My office was aware that the minister encouraged the ombudsperson to bring the allegations to the appropriate authorities.

That is how we need to make sure that proper steps and processes are followed and that everyone is taken seriously.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, those are improper steps.

Three years ago the Prime Minister was told by the Privy Council and by his office that the ombudsman was not the appropriate figure to investigate sexual misconduct allegations. It was up to his Minister of National Defence or himself. Those are the two leaders that men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces are looking to for leadership. Both of them failed in this instance.

Will the Prime Minister stand in this House and acknowledge that they failed this woman serving her country?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, supporting the women and men who choose to serve in the armed forces is a priority for this government, as it has been for all governments. We have moved forward in significantly strengthening measures to support survivors of sexual assault and to create

more processes so that armed forces members do not have to face sexual assault in their workplace or in their service.

It is not for the Prime Minister or the Minister of National Defence to investigate allegations. It is for us to ensure that they are appropriately followed up on by the authorities, by the independent investigators. That is what was done in this case.

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## PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, creating a four-month interval between the first and second doses of the Pfizer vaccine means the government is now advising an off-label use of the vaccine schedule. Could promoting an off-label use of the vaccine have contractual obligations for Canada's deal with Pfizer?

• (1425)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is not for politicians to make recommendations on usage of vaccines or intervals; it is for experts Canada turns to, like the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, to make the recommendations that will keep the largest numbers of Canadians safe. We have experts and authorities who have analyzed these vaccines and determined them to be safe and effective. That is how Canadians can have confidence in the vaccine steps going forward. We will always defer to experts and scientists when it comes to the health of Canadians.

[Translation]

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, people are concerned about the four-month interval between the first and second doses of the vaccine.

The contracts are secret. There is no vaccine schedule.

Can the Prime Minister tell us how this interval will affect our contracts with Pfizer?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the vaccines approved in Canada are safe and effective.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization has sent directives to the provinces and territories on how to administer the vaccines approved for use in Canada. This helps them to maximize the effectiveness of the vaccines used across the country and minimize the most severe consequences of COVID-19.

On this side of the House, we will always defer to our experts and scientists when it comes to the health and safety of Canadians.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on this day of remembrance for victims of the pandemic, is it not time to give real meaning to the day?

Is it not time to temporarily put aside ambitions that are, quite frankly, political, and simply do the right thing by increasing the health transfers immediately and unconditionally, as Quebec and all the provinces have been calling for, before the budget is tabled?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all levels of government are working together to protect Canadians from COVID-19.

As part of the government's response to the pandemic, we have given \$19 billion to the provinces and territories through the safe restart agreement. This is in addition to the \$40 billion a year we already provide to the provinces and territories.

As I have said, we are continuing to respond to immediate needs and, once this crisis has passed, we will continue to be there to increase health transfers in the years ahead.

\* \* \*

**PENSIONS**

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that is not what all of the provinces and Quebec are unanimously calling for, and the federal government is their creation. We need to stop talking about what is being done and what is not.

Would taking care of the physical and mental health of the most fragile and vulnerable members of our society not be a better way to give real meaning to this day than inventing a form of age discrimination? This is coming from a government that claims to be against all forms of discrimination, and that should include made-up forms.

Is it not time that the government said “yes” and increased the old age security pension for everyone as of the age of 65?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, protecting our seniors has always been at the core of everything this government does.

We increased the guaranteed income supplement by 10% for the most vulnerable seniors. We also recognize that older seniors are more vulnerable and need more support. That is why we promised to increase the old age pension by 10% for seniors aged 75 and up, because they have more needs than younger seniors. We will be there every step of the way to support our seniors, as we always have been. We will continue to be there for them, and we will continue to support them during the pandemic and after it is over by ensuring that top-quality long-term care is available across the country.

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**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the scandal involving sexual misconduct in the military and the Liberals' attempts to hush it up, there is no telling what tomorrow may bring because the story

keeps changing. With each passing day come new revelations about the Prime Minister's failure to act on the serious allegations against General Vance.

What else will come to light today or tomorrow? Who knows? What we do know is that the Liberals let down victims in the armed forces.

Can the Prime Minister promise us that he will be transparent and finally reform this institution tainted by sordid scandals?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know there are serious shortcomings in the protections for victims and survivors of harassment in our armed forces. The same is true at the RCMP, according to the Bastarache commission, and at Correctional Service Canada, according to new reports.

As a country, we have to do a better job of supporting victims and making resources available to all those who make allegations, have concerns or report incidents.

We must also change the culture within these institutions to ensure that such things never happen again.

● (1430)

[English]

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, our armed forces have a well-documented sexualized culture, which the Liberals promised to address in 2018. Since then, the Prime Minister has not only taken no real action to address this problem, but has actively ignored the issue. The Prime Minister admitted to knowing about the allegations of sexual harassment against General Vance, allegations he and his minister refused to act on. We need to ensure that women who serve can do so equally.

Will the Prime Minister apologize to women in the armed forces for failing them and allowing this toxic and dangerous sexualized culture to continue?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is extremely obvious that more needs to be done and quicker. There is no question about that. Every woman and man who serves in our armed forces deserves to work in a safe environment and have resources and support if they have allegations or experience unwanted behaviours.

However, it is not true that, as the member says, we have not done anything. We passed Bill C-77, a declaration of victims rights that puts victims at the core of the military justice system and reviews unfounded cases. We created the sexual misconduct response centre, which provides confidential, 24/7 support services to CAF members. We implemented the path to dignity and respect, a strategy for long-term culture change. We also put in place the response and support coordination program for CAF members. However, there is more to do and we will do it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence, Michael Wernick, the former clerk of the Privy Council, Janine Sherman, Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet, Privy Council Office, and Elder Marques, a former senior advisor to the Prime Minister, were aware of the serious allegations against General Vance. The Prime Minister confirmed yesterday that his office was aware of this, but now he would like us to believe that he was not informed in 2018.

How is it possible that no one thought to inform the Prime Minister about an issue with such serious implications?

[English]

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we take all allegations extremely seriously when it comes to inappropriate sexual behaviour. This is one of the reasons we took very strong actions in this case. We put the ombudsman in touch with the Privy Council Office so that the appropriate authorities could take action. As the Prime Minister has stated, no politician should ever be part of an investigation.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is actually quite simple. It is important to understand the context. The Prime Minister initially said that he was not aware of any allegations. Then, in a press conference last Friday, he said that he was not aware of any specific allegation.

Was the Prime Minister aware in March 2018 that there was an allegation against the chief of the defence staff, General Vance, yes or no?

[English]

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I stated before, no elected official should ever be part of an investigation or lead any type of an investigation. It has to go to the appropriate authority so that an independent investigation can be conducted. That is exactly what has taken place here.

We will take strong action. We have more work to do and we will get it done.

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[Translation]

## FINANCE

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the other G7 countries and all 10 provinces have been transparent with their citizens and have not been afraid to table a budget despite the pandemic, the prime minister has been hiding the financial reality that awaits future generations of Canadians for over 700 days. When a family asks a bank for a loan and refuses to disclose any financial records, the loan will be refused. The problem is that the government also plays the role of banker and that the prime minister thinks that budgets balance themselves.

On what date will the government finally consent to table a budget for Canadians to see?

## Oral Questions

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government continues to assess the economic impact of regional lockdowns, the emergence of new variants of the virus and the accelerated vaccine roll-out. We thank all Canadians for their contribution to the pre-budgetary consultations. The date of the budget will be announced in due course.

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely unacceptable that this government has not presented a budget to Canadians for more than 700 days. Canada is the only G7 country that did not table a budget last year. The current delay has become the longest in Canada's history.

I am concerned when I hear the Minister of Finance say that the next budget will be most significant one of our lifetimes.

Will this government go down in history as the one that made thousands of Canadians go broke because it failed to present a real economic recovery plan?

When will we have a budget?

We want a date, please.

• (1435)

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to note two things.

First, we received an extraordinary response from Canadians during our pre-budgetary consultations and I want to thank all Canadians who took part.

Second, if the Conservatives truly want to support Canadians, and they need support during this crisis, they should support Bill C-14. That would be the right way to support our country.

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[English]

## EMPLOYMENT

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, when I asked about the 850,000 Canadians who have lost their jobs, giving Canada the highest unemployment rate in the G7, the Prime Minister told a childish joke, then sat down and smirked. He should know that for every one percentage point increase in unemployment, we get a two percentage point increase in suicides. People's lives are at stake. They want to know how they are going to pay the bills.

We have the worst job record in the G7. Will we get a plan for paycheques or is the Prime Minister just going to sit there and smirk?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me first correct the record and point out that at 64.3%, Canada has a higher labour force participation rate than Germany, at 56.1%, the United States, at 61.3%, and Japan, at 62%.

*Oral Questions*

Let me also say this. I absolutely believe that every Canadian who is unemployed is facing a personal tragedy. That is why our government has done and will continue to do whatever it takes to support Canadians.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a shame that the Prime Minister does not have the guts to stand up and answer the question himself. The reality is that he has said 49 different times that the best measure of job market success is the unemployment rate. Now that we have the highest unemployment in the G7, the Liberals want to change the measurement. They say we should celebrate them for the recovery of lost jobs. Of course, Canada had the most jobs to recover because it had the biggest job losses.

People do not want any more games with statistics. They need paycheques in their bank accounts and food on the table. When will they get that?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me share a very important statistic with the member opposite and all Canadians. In the fourth quarter, Canada's GDP grew at an annualized rate of nearly 10%. That was higher than the GDPs of the U.S., the U.K., Germany, France and Italy. I would like to congratulate the Canadians whose hard work and innovative approach made that possible, and I would like to say to all members of the House, particularly the Conservatives, that by supporting Bill C-14 we can all support those hard-working Canadians.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HEALTH**

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the pandemic officially started one year ago today. Since then, more than 10,500 Quebecers have died, spending their last moments suffering in our care centres. Far too many of them died alone, away from their families.

Today is a day to honour their memory and comfort their loved ones, but it is also a day to take stock of what happened. For example, it is quite clear that the crisis was exacerbated by the chronic underfunding of our health care system.

When will the government increase health transfers?

[English]

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have been there for the provinces and territories during the pandemic, starting with \$19 billion in safe restart money and through the acquisition of personal protective equipment; the purchasing of therapeutics, drugs and rapid tests; and the millions of dollars for vaccines purchased for the provinces and territories. We will be there for the provinces and territories as we get through this together.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, more than 10,500 Quebecers died, but more than 20,000 of us were hospitalized and recovered, thanks to our dedicated health care workers, the vast majority of whom are women who

have been making a lot of sacrifices and working tons of overtime this past year. The government can see they are giving their all to save lives. These women are bearing the brunt of the federal government's chronic underfunding over the past 45 years.

When will the government permanently and unconditionally increase health transfers?

● (1440)

[English]

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, we have been there for the provinces and territories. We will be there for the provinces and territories, whether it is transfers through the safe restart agreement, whether it has been as partners purchasing personal protective equipment, therapeutics and rapid tests. We are paying for all the vaccines.

We have been there for the provinces and territories and we will continue to be there throughout this pandemic and beyond.

[Translation]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Ottawa must do its part.

Unfortunately, it is too late for the seniors who tragically died in long-term care homes crippled by chronic underfunding.

However, it is not too late to send in reinforcements and offer respite and decent working conditions to our health care providers. It is not too late to offer rapid access to health care to the people left behind by triaging. If fact, it is never too late to do the right thing, especially to prevent further deaths.

When will the government agree to permanently and unconditionally increase health transfers?

[English]

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we share the grief and sadness of the many lives that have been lost to COVID-19. We share the commitment to strengthen standards for long-term care.

We know there is a lot of work to do with the provinces and territories to support them in their obligations and their responsibilities to provide quality care to seniors, no matter in which province they live. We will be there for the provinces and territories to ensure that no matter where seniors live they will have dignity and safety in their lives.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier in question period, the Prime Minister said that it was not for politicians to make decisions on vaccines, but that seems to be exactly what he is doing.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization said not to give the AstraZeneca vaccine to seniors, but his government ignored that advice. Now Pfizer, Canada's chief science officer and dozens of Canadian medical experts are advising not to delay the Pfizer doses by four months, but he is advising it anyway.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Is the government making political decisions on vaccine dosing because it is trying to cover up the vaccine shortage that it created?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, within that question it appears that the member perhaps does not understand that the federal government does not provide health care directly to Canadians. In fact, what we do is provide support to the provinces and territories to deliver on their health care responsibilities.

Furthermore, NACI, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, is an independent organization comprised of scientists and researchers who study the evidence, who study the recommendations and then make recommendations of their own, which the provinces and territories can choose to follow.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is the Minister of Health and these organizations report into her. I know if I were in her role, I would be asking why there is conflicting advice on all these dosing decisions and vaccine delivery schedules. I think that is pretty important for Canadians to understand. Even the president of Pfizer said that the differences in these opinions could lead to vaccine hesitancy and concerns about taking the vaccines.

Why is the minister not doing her job and putting a structure in place that would actually provide clarity for Canadians?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member does not realize that Health Canada's role is actually to approve a drug, or a vaccine in this case, based on the review of the science and evidence that the pharmaceutical company presents. NACI's role is to make recommendations about how best to use vaccines that come onto the market in Canada. That is exactly what it has done. They are the experts and scientists and this government believes in following the research and science as is determined by those experts.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** That is very interesting, Mr. Speaker, because Pfizer, the company that would provide input into the review process said no dice on the four-month interval, that it did not think that was good. In fact, NACI did not even contact the drug manufacturer for data on the dosing interval.

I kind of think the minister perhaps is not doing her job here. There is a lot at stake. Canadians need clarity and certainty on this type of information so the government is not causing vaccine hesitancy. Why can the minister not do anything right?

• (1445)

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Putting aside the personal attack, Mr. Speaker, it is very important for politicians to follow research, science and evidence, and that is exactly what is happening in her province through the special advisory committee and with Dr. Hinshaw. In fact, the Province of Alberta has accepted NACI's recommendations, and many others have. This is a decision that is best left with scientists, researchers and the doctors who will make those dosing decisions.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have really struggled during this demanding and deadly pandemic year, but Canada's billionaires have added over \$60 billion to their wealth, so far, during the pandemic.

We learned this morning from the CCPA that a minimum wealth tax would raise over \$10 billion a year to meet the needs of Canadians, and 80% of Canadians support this measure.

While so many Canadians suffer, why will the Prime Minister not force billionaires to pay their fair share and why is he so opposed to a wealth tax?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite virtually for his sincere concern for the Canadians who are hardest hit by this COVID recession.

Let me assure the member opposite virtually that our government absolutely does believe, as we said in the fall economic statement, that there are some additional tax measures we need to put in place. We think that now in particular is the time for the international digital giants to pay their fair share. This crisis has shown all of us how dependent we are on the virtual space, and it is time for the international companies to pay their share.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in February, I warned the government of cross-border tax consequences of essential workers being told to work from home in Canada. Now these workers could owe tens of thousands of dollars in taxes in Canada on top of the taxes they are already paying in the United States. U.S. tax problems are a historical issue for Windsor, Tecumseh and Essex, caused by the Liberal government's mismanagement.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Will his government fix this problem by the end of March, before the U.S. tax deadline, and will he ensure workers are not punished for following his advice?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's question is a really important one. I want to thank every single Canadian, whether they live in Windsor or anywhere else, for following the essential advice from public health authorities to stay home when we can to protect ourselves and protect our neighbours.

When it comes to the tax implications of that decision, particularly for people who live and work across the border, that is something we are looking at carefully. Again, I thank the member for raising that important issue.

*Oral Questions***SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, small businesses in Surrey Centre and across Canada are wondering how the reference period for eligibility for the emergency rent subsidy, wage subsidy and emergency business account will be impacted in 2021. Many SMEs experienced dramatic losses in profit in 2020 and wonder how this will impact their eligibility for support in the upcoming period of March 14 to June 5.

Could the minister please update the House on how our government will address the eligibility of these essential business support programs in the coming months?

**Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Surrey Centre for his strong advocacy.

From the beginning of this pandemic, we have been clear with Canadians that we are there for them now and we will be through our recovery.

Just last week, we announced that the government intended to extend the current rate structures for the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency rent subsidy to June 5. These subsidy rates will remain the same, and the lockdown support will continue to be there to provide additional support to hard hit businesses, with rent support of up to 90%.

Workers and businesses have shown incredible resilience over the past year and we will continue to be there for them.

\* \* \*

● (1450)

**INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister made election promises in 2015 and then again in 2019 to eliminate all long-term drinking water advisories in first nations communities, he was glad to stand in front of cameras and microphones.

As we have seen too many times recently, when the plan falls apart, the Prime Minister suddenly gets camera shy. Making promises that he cannot keep is not a good way to build trust in a relationship that badly needs more of it.

Does the minister regret the Prime Minister's broken promise?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member opposite was not part of the government that created this problem in the first place. I do appreciate his earnest question.

In 2015, we made a clear promise to all first nations and Canadians to end the unacceptable long-term drinking water advisories affecting first nations and communities. At that time, there were 105. We just yesterday celebrated the 100th and 101st lift. We are getting there. We invested \$1.5 billion additional in November to get there, as the member well knows. We look forward to keep lifting them as the days go on.

**Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister likes to talk a lot about numbers and the advisories lifted, but let us talk about some other numbers.

In last week's Auditor General's Report, there is clear identification of the Liberal government's failure in the past six years. In those six years, over 50 long-term advisories were added. Over 1,200 short-term advisories were added. Twenty per cent of the long-term advisories that were lifted were done so by temporary measures. We are talking about a systematic failure.

Does the minister believe that a new website will make up for the trust lost by the Prime Minister's broken promise?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the member paid attention to the information on the website, he would see that every community that is currently on a long-term water advisory has a plan.

When I sat down with my team, when I had the privilege of being named minister, we saw that we needed to commit to communities for long-term operations and maintenance of a critical asset. That is what we did with an announcement in November, which essentially doubles our commitment to getting first nations off long-term water advisories. It is something we will continue to do in partnership.

I would note for the member opposite that of those communities that are on long-term water advisories and that have been for over 10 years, half of them are now producing clean water, and the rest will come very soon.

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**AIRLINE INDUSTRY**

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday government members had their opportunity to show their support for the tens of thousands of airline workers who have lost their jobs, by supporting our opposition day motion, but instead they decided to vote against it and turn their backs on the tens of thousands of workers.

We have been in this pandemic for a year now. When will we see a plan for the airline sector from the government?

**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will never turn on our backs on the aviation sector and its workers. As a member of Parliament from Mississauga, many workers in the aviation sector live in my riding. I have been speaking with them and understand the level of anxiety and concerns they have. That is why, from the beginning, our government rolled out broad-based support for many workers. However, we recognize that further support is needed and we are currently in discussions with the airline sector.

Let me just say that Canadians understand the political games the Conservatives are playing. We will stand by aviation workers.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, well, for Canadians with no food on the table, it is not a game. Tens of thousands of airline workers are still without jobs and there is no end in sight. These workers are struggling to put food on their tables, yet the government has chosen to leave them behind.

Therefore, I have this question for the minister. What would he like to say to all of these workers who are struggling to pay their bills and put food on their tables?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I say to workers in the aviation sector and all Canadian workers, “We’ve got your back”.

Our government, our Prime Minister, have been there from day one and we will continue to be there for them. I recognize that more work is needed, and we are in the middle of a serious discussion with the airline sector about providing support. Discussions are ongoing. As members can imagine, there are multiple layers to these conversations. I hope to see them come to an end very soon.

\* \* \*

● (1455)

[Translation]

### PENSIONS

**Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today, let us take time to remember the more than 10,500 Quebecers we lost and were unable to mourn properly.

I would be remiss if I failed to point out that nearly 95% of those who were taken from us were seniors. They were the ones hit hardest by the pandemic, by the isolation and by the death of a spouse or friend.

Today, when the focus is on the struggles of those aged 65 and over, can the government give them some good news by finally increasing the old age security pension?

[English]

**Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for many months we have been providing support for seniors through tax-free payments and enhanced community supports. While the government remains committed to implementing the policies as reaffirmed in the throne speech, as all members know, at this time we are focused on managing the COVID-19 public health crisis. We have provided financial support for seniors 65 and above, with greater support for the most vulnerable. Seniors can be assured that our government will continue to be there for them.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what the government needs to do is support all seniors 65 and up, not separate them into two classes as of the age of 75.

It is just as difficult for a 74-year-old to lose their spouse to COVID-19 as it is for a 76-year old. It is just as difficult for a 74-year-old to be deprived of the company of their grandchildren as it is for a 76-year-old. It is just as difficult for a 74-year-old to live in complete isolation as it is for a 76-year-old. The government has

created two classes of seniors, which means two classes of sacrifices and two classes of suffering.

Why does the government not announce a pension increase for all seniors 65 and up?

[English]

**Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we definitely recognize the challenges that seniors have been facing across the country during this pandemic and the sacrifices they have been making. We also recognize that older seniors have different needs. They are more likely to outlive their savings, have disabilities, be unable to work, be widowed, all the while that their health care costs are rising. Fifty-seven percent are women, four in 10 are widows, 59% have incomes below \$30,000. Our plan will help address these pressures by increasing old age security by 10% for seniors aged 75 and up. We will always be there to support seniors.

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### CARBON PRICING

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are 13 irrigation districts in Alberta and five in the riding of Bow River alone. These districts are a critical part of the Canadian agricultural industry, yet the carbon tax and the clean fuel standards are hurting their operations and affecting the economies of rural communities. With carbon taxation ballooning by 500%, this tax amounts to millions of dollars. Instead of this money being reinvested, it is leaving my rural communities.

Will the government exempt the farmers who have to use power for irrigation from this crippling carbon tax?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague is aware, the price on pollution is part of a comprehensive approach to addressing the climate challenge and ensuring that we are creating a world that will be a livable one for our children and grandchildren while concurrently seizing the economic opportunities that are offered through a low-carbon universe.

With respect to the agricultural community, we have exempted on-farm fuels and have indicated that we are working towards solutions, including a rebate, with respect to grain drying and some of the other issues. We certainly are partnering with the agricultural community to ensure it is working with the government and with all sectors of the economy as we move forward to find solutions that will be low carbon and will be very—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

*Oral Questions***HOUSING**

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for over a year, the Liberal government has claimed that it has housed one million families, but it goes silent when pressed for the data. After repeated requests, the CMHC finally tabled its figures with the HUMA committee. The numbers fall short of one million, confirming that the repeated assertion made by the government is false.

Will the minister correct the record and admit he has not helped one million families find housing?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of absent federal leadership in housing, we brought in the national housing strategy, a 10-year, \$70 billion plan to make sure that every single Canadian has a safe and affordable place to call home. Every other day we are making announcements either to build new affordable housing units or repair existing units, or to introduce the Canada housing benefit in yet another province. We have no lessons to take on affordable housing and housing affordability from the Conservatives.

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• (1500)

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Dr. Mark Sinyor, a renowned psychiatrist, has stated with regard to MAID that “in medicine we quantify the harms of new treatments before deciding whether it is acceptable to use them.... The process that the Senate and the House of Commons propose to facilitate the provision of MAID for mental illness really reflects a sunset on the scientific method and usual medical standards. That should worry us all.”

So much for following medical and scientific advice. Does this not worry the Minister of Justice?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question on this very sensitive and important topic and the very important bill that is currently before the House. We have, with mental illness, a very sensitive and serious challenge. We have proposed a committee of experts to look at it and to give us guidance moving forward, and in recomposing the parliamentary committee to review what was Bill C-14, passed in 2016, we are sticking to our original plan to look at that question with all seriousness.

[Translation]

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government recently announced the coming into force of the new version of the Divorce Act. The legislation, which passed in 2019, marks the first substantive changes to family laws in 20 years.

Could the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada please update the House today regarding the changes that can be found in the new version?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for her wisdom and her hard work.

The changes made to the Divorce Act will modernize the justice system so it supports all Canadian families. The act puts the best interests of the child first and helps address family violence in order to make the family justice system fair and effective for everyone.

I have to thank our provincial and territorial partners for their co-operation. Together, we have been able to ensure that the laws in place are truly beneficial to families who are often going through difficult times.

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[English]

**FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, credit unions are vital to our rural communities. Farmers, small businesses and residents rely on their services. Unfortunately, unlike big corporate banks, the tax code does not exempt credit union investment services from the GST. Rural Canadians who use credit unions have just as much right to access sales-tax-free investment services as those who use the big banks.

Will the government take action to treat credit unions and the rural Canadians who use them equally?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I strongly agree with the member opposite about the important role that credit unions play, certainly in rural communities, and also in municipalities across the country. Credit unions are an essential part of the Canadian economy and of Canadian communities, and I am very glad to hear the member offering suggestions on how we can allow credit unions to do an even better job serving their members.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Conservatives support common-sense measures to stop gun violence. The Liberal government claims to, but its actions show that it would rather criminalize regular Canadians than get tough on real criminals. Right now, it is moving to confiscate legally purchased guns from responsible hunters and sport shooters, while just a few weeks ago it voted against increasing sentences for criminals with smuggled guns.

If the government is serious about ending gun violence, why did it vote against tougher sentences for gun smugglers?



**Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we promised Canadians that we would strengthen gun control while the Conservatives have promised the gun lobby that they will weaken it.

After the Conservatives cut hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of border service officers and RCMP officers, it is a bit tiresome to hear more empty Conservative tough talk on gun crime. Canadians need a government with the resolve to put Canadians' safety first. That is why we are strengthening gun control, investing in law enforcement and in our communities.

We will do the work that is necessary to keep communities safe, and we will not take any lessons through more tough talk and empty words from the Conservatives.

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• (1505)

### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for decades there had never been a gap of more than two years between budgets, until the current Liberal government. Despite COVID-19, all other G7 countries produced budgets last year. So too did our provinces and territories, but the Liberals could not manage. It has now slipped out that they have no intention of releasing a budget this month either.

Either the Liberals do not have a plan for reopening the economy, or they are refusing to be transparent with Canadians. Which is it?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me just point out a few things. First of all, in our fall economic statement, we offered extensive financial information, including extensive five-year fiscal forecasts, which took into account varying possibilities on the virus resurgence scenario.

The second thing I would like to say is our government has been there for Canadians throughout this crisis and we will continue to be there for Canadians. I would like to urge the Conservatives to join us in supporting Canadians by supporting Bill C-14.

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### HEALTH

**Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today marks one year since the World Health Organization designated COVID-19 a pandemic. Today, we are wearing white to remember those we have lost. While Canadians have been practising public health measures to keep each other safe, scientists around the world have been working non-stop to find vaccines. News about vaccines in Canada is promising, and I know we are all looking forward to getting vaccinations when the time comes.

On the one-year anniversary of COVID-19, can the Minister of Health update us on the status of vaccines in Canada?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for her incredible hard work and advocacy during this difficult time. This year has

### Oral Questions

been incredibly challenging for all Canadians. I want to recognize the sacrifices of all Canadians on this national day of observance.

Throughout the pandemic, we have relied on science and evidence to keep Canadians safe, and our vaccine plan is no different. As of today, 3.8 million vaccines have been sent to provinces and territories with millions more on the way this month and well into the spring.

This is good news. We see the light at the end of the tunnel. I look forward to supporting provinces and territories to get every Canadian who wants it to be vaccinated by September.

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### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Doreen Saunders, an elder from York Factory First Nation, died a preventable death last week because of medical neglect by the federal government. York Factory has not had the number of nurses promised or a doctor in months. Doreen Saunders is not alone. York Factory is not alone.

There are no excuses. What will the government do to make sure first nations are getting the medical personnel they have been promised and need? What will the government do to achieve justice for Doreen Saunders and her family, for York Factory and for all first nations?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Canada, I offer my sincere condolences on this tragic passing. We know that first nations face a terrible health crisis, particularly during this pandemic. We know that coming out of COVID we must invest in health infrastructures in communities. We must invest in housing as a health crisis.

We know that this is the challenge. We know that this inequity exists and persists and have made communities more vulnerable. There are many examples of this across Canada, and it is entirely unacceptable, but this government has made massive investments in bridging that infrastructure gap and we will continue to do so.

*Government Orders***THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the government's commitment to plant two billion trees is important to address climate change, but seedlings cannot replace the biodiversity of old growth forests or come close to matching their capacity to sequester carbon. We need old growth ecosystems for our survival.

Will the government work with first nations and the provinces to protect endangered old growth ecosystems on Canada's west coast, stop the destruction of the boreal forest and ban unsustainable forestry practices such as the use of whole trees for the creation of biofuel pellets?

• (1510)

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member indicated, we are committed to planting two billion trees and to restoring wetlands and grasslands as key elements of our focus on nature-based climate solutions. These investments will also be very important in addressing biodiversity concerns.

The government has also committed to a pathway to achieving 30% protection of terrestrial areas by 2030. There is certainly a key focus of securing these spaces. We will be working with provinces and territories, which control land management in most of the country, with a focus on protecting intact ecosystems and areas of high biodiversity value.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as per tradition, it is time for the Thursday question.

We would like to know what Parliament can expect in the coming days, knowing that the schedule in March is a little strange. Last week we were in our ridings, this week we are in the House, next week we will be back in our ridings, then we will come back to the House, then we will go back to our ridings for two weeks, and then finally, we will start a good run in Parliament from mid-April to mid-June, when Parliament will be sitting for 10 out of 11 weeks.

My question today is the following: What does our government have on the agenda for the coming days?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend for his question and for giving me an opportunity to talk about what we plan to do this week and once we return to the House.

This afternoon, we will resume our study of the Senate's amendments to Bill C-7, regarding medical assistance in dying. Tomorrow, we will resume debate on Bill C-24, which would increase the number of weeks of EI regular benefits and make international travellers ineligible for recovery benefits during their mandatory quarantine.

[English]

I would also like to inform the House that for the week of March 22, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday shall be allotted days.

[Translation]

Until then, I wish all of our colleagues an excellent week working in their ridings.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**CRIMINAL CODE**

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

**Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in relation to the consideration of the Senate amendments to Bill C-7, an act to amend the Criminal Code on medical assistance in dying, I move:

That the debate be not further adjourned.

[Translation]

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 67(1), there will now be a 30-minute question period.

[English]

I will ask members to be as concise as possible with their questions and comments.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

• (1515)

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the use of closure is quite unprecedented in Parliament, particularly on a topic as important as medical assistance in dying. In fact, the Minister of Justice, in question period today, said that this is a sensitive and important topic, yet he is limiting discussion of this important topic. There are literally hundreds of thousands of Canadians, those disability groups, indigenous leaders and mental health advocates, who have reasonable questions about this bill.

The minister knows the Senate substantively changed Bill C-7. Medical assistance in dying is no longer a standard of reasonably foreseeable death. It is no longer a standard of a irremediable condition. It is now going to include mental health conditions, even though there is the ability for people to get treatment and help, which is not the context first intended by Bill C-7 when the minister introduced it.

Just a month after Bell Let's Talk Day, when we talked about the need to talk when people are struggling, and when mental health advocates and thousands of Canadians have questions about this substantive change to how we address vulnerable people, people in the palliative stage of a disease and our publicly funded medical health system, why would the government limit reasonable questions of concern, particularly when it comes to mental health, and use closure in this way on Bill C-7?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have given the House more than ample opportunity to debate this bill. I note that 139 members have spoken for close to 45 hours on this critical piece of legislation.

We did not stop there. We offered to extend debate at least three times, and each time the Conservatives refused. This is over and above the dilatory tactics they have been practising with this bill and other bills for months. They do not want more time; they just want to stop it altogether. The court was clear that it will not grant us another extension.

With regard to mental health, it was always going to be the subject of a parliamentary review. It will still be the subject of a parliamentary review. We have added an expert medical panel to give us expert guidance on it, but ultimately it will be up to parliamentarians to do what was always planned: to study this criterion as it has to be studied before bringing it within the Carter parameters.

• (1520)

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is rare for the Bloc Québécois to support a closure motion. Historically, if we look at the list of events involving the Bloc Québécois since its inception, it is extremely rare.

We support the principle on compassionate grounds, because people are suffering while they wait for us to do our job. It is time for us, after so much deliberation, to take action and show compassion.

The Bloc Québécois defends the interests of Quebeckers, and we are interested in their needs only. We acknowledge that, often, the needs of Quebeckers and other Canadians coincide. In Quebec, there is a broad consensus in favour of MAID, and we have been going our own way on this issue for years. For that reason, the Bloc Québécois will support the closure motion.

The Conservatives want more time to debate the issue. Since the report stage of this bill, 67 of the 83 speeches made have been made by the Conservatives. Last week, the government asked three times to extend a sitting into the evening to continue the debate and allow the Conservatives to continue saying what they had to say. All three times, the Conservative Party refused.

The judge extended the deadline a fourth time to give Parliament the time and space it needed to adopt the bill. The judge granted a final extension until March 26, a deadline we must respect. For these reasons, the Bloc Québécois will support the closure motion.

I have a simple question for the Minister of Justice: In his opinion, why is March 26 really our last chance to adopt the bill?

### *Government Orders*

**Hon. David Lametti:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for La Prairie for his comments. Obviously, I share his opinion that we are here to reduce the suffering of Canadians across the country.

I agree that there is a consensus not only in Quebec, but across Canada. Canada is ready to take the step. As we saw in the debates, and especially in the contribution of the Senate, which I thank, our society is awaiting other changes that go even further. Canada is ready to accept this practice, which is aimed at reducing suffering and showing compassion, and which respects life in a very profound way.

To answer my hon. colleague's question, the Superior Court was clear: There will be no more extensions. It is time that the Conservatives cease their stalling tactics and start putting Canadians before partisanship.

[English]

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, there will perhaps be no more serious a vote than the one dealing with medical assistance in dying, and as New Democrats, we are very rarely in favour of closure. We have heard there is a consensus in this country, but I am not clear what country the minister is living in.

The government has failed to deliver the kind of adequate consultations with people in disability communities that would allow for this egregious extension into mental health without reasonable foreseeability. The minister talks about care, compassion and taking care of Canadians, so why does he still continue to fail to listen to the voices of people with disabilities and fail to account for their compassionate care in living, while he rushes through this final decision in their deaths?

**Hon. David Lametti:** Madam Speaker, I assure the House and Canadians that nothing could be further from the truth. We consulted widely and deeply, beginning in January 2020, on this phase of the legislation, Bill C-7. We consulted over 300,000 Canadians online. We spread out across the country, from coast to coast to coast, to listen to Canadians who had experience with MAID and to listen to the disability community. Indeed, the very structure of Bill C-7 takes into account what we have heard from the disability community and builds in safeguards for the non-end-of-life scenario, representing the concerns we heard directly from them.

The leadership in the Senate from a senator who lives with a disability is, quite vigorously, evidence that we have indeed listened to and supported that community. With—

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**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** It is time for another question. There are a lot of questions and comments, so I ask members to make sure they keep their questions and comments to one minute each.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, this is difficult because I sympathize with the minister. I recognize the March 26 deadline. I sympathize with the leader of the Bloc Québécois and his concerns as well. I completely agree that the Conservatives have used time to block the bill. I saw it.

However, I have to say to the Minister of Justice that this is very difficult, because the Senate amendments represent something entirely new. They are different from what we dealt with at report stage before.

I am asking the minister if he is really satisfied. I am trying to be as non-partisan as possible, but I do not feel it is time for closure.

● (1525)

**Hon. David Lametti:** Madam Speaker, I am satisfied that we are still respecting the process we put forward with Bill C-7 that had the general support of Canadians. We have always said that we would be dealing with the question of mental health in a profound way in the parliamentary review that was originally envisaged in 2016. We are still doing that.

We are now benefiting from the work the Senate has done. We will benefit from the work of the committee too. However, at the end of the day, I want to reassure the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands that as parliamentarians, we will roll up our sleeves and work through the mental health criterion. That will bring us within the parameters of the Carter decision and will fulfill the right of all Canadians to have access to medical assistance in dying in a reasonable and safeguarded way.

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC):** Madam Speaker, all members of Parliament have seen their email accounts absolutely blow up. We are receiving tons of emails and phone calls about this issue.

I am going to quickly share one that I received. I think our colleagues really need to take a look at it. They will have it in their emails. It is from Trudo Lemmens, a professor in the faculty of law at the University of Toronto. He said:

I have worked on many challenging health law and ethics issues for more than twenty years as a professor of law and bioethics. But never have I felt the weight of history more seriously as with the debate around the expansion of Medical Assistance in Dying to people with disabilities, including those with mental illness, who would have years or decades of life left, if we as a society provided needed support, rather than a fast-track to state funded and medical system provided end-of-life, and a facilitation of suicide.

Please take seriously your obligation as parliamentarians and ask yourself what a precautionary approach requires. Think what it will do in the long term to the social fabric of our society. Imagine also what you would tell in the future to one of your voters, a neighbour, a family member, if you voted in support of this law and they come to you after they lost a brother, sister, daughter, son, father, mother, or close friend who in a period of serious mental health hardship and without sufficient support of our health care system have indirectly been encouraged by—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member has had a minute and a half. There is not enough time for everybody, so I want to ask the hon. minister to respond.

**Hon. David Lametti:** Madam Speaker, indeed, I received that email from my long-standing colleague, Professor Lemmens at the University of Toronto.

What I would say to him and to the hon. member is that we are trying to reduce people's suffering and it is a question of autonomy. No matter where one comes from in society, we do not have a right to tell other people that they have to live and suffer simply because we are uncomfortable with something.

The reverse is this. At every step of the way, I, personally, and my government, have tried to help the situation of the disabled to make this a truly autonomous and meaningful choice. There is, in the preamble of this legislation, a reference to that. We are working as a government to improve the situation of people living with disabilities, for example, and are investing in mental health, as we have done and as no government has ever done in Canadian history, simply to make this autonomous choice a meaningful one.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, one of the more interesting aspects of the government's motion in response to the Senate amendments is the creation of an independent panel of experts to regulate the issue of expanding medical assistance in dying to mental illness as the sole underlying condition—something the Bloc Québécois is far from convinced it is a good idea—as well as the creation of a joint committee to discuss the safeguards. The Bloc Québécois supports advance requests, but we think that at this stage in our work, it is time to go to committee.

I have a question for the Minister of Justice. Given that there is a broad consensus in Quebec on permitting advance requests for medical assistance in dying and there are a lot of questions about mental illness, why did he expand medical assistance in dying to mental illness and then not permit advance requests in cases such as Alzheimer's? What are the legal reasons?

● (1530)

**Hon. David Lametti:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Montcalm for his question and his valuable work on this file.

We created a committee of experts to help us, but it is up to us, as parliamentarians working in the joint committee and in the House, to come to a decision in the next two years. We are delegating a study, but it is up to parliamentarians to determine the parameters of the question.

We need to keep working on advance requests. That is what we have always said, and we are ready to do that work. We have not had a chance to do it at this stage, and we are going to go ahead with the mental illness issue and the minors issue at the next stage.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I listened first-hand to so many hours of debate from members of the Conservative Party in particular and have drawn the conclusion that if it were up to a number of its members, this legislation would never see the light of day, that they would continue to talk it out indefinitely. I think the Bloc has recognized that, and it is one of the reasons it was so important to bring in time allocation to meet that deadline.

Could the minister provide his thoughts as to why it was so important for us to continue to move this legislation forward?

**Hon. David Lametti:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and his collaboration.

We have given the House ample time to debate this bill and the Senate amendments, which members of the Conservative Party have refused to do on three occasions when we offered to extend debate until midnight.

There are 139 members in this place who have spoken on this bill for close to 45 hours. We have a deadline. The deadline carries with it serious consequences. It is clear we will not get another extension from the Superior Court and that we have to move forward on this piece of legislation, which I again assure members of this House has the large consensus of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a sad day that I have to stand up and contradict the minister. I have in my hand a letter from Vulnerable Persons Standard, which represents 129 organizations. These are organizations, not individuals.

The letter states:

As it stands, Bill C-7 is dangerous and discriminatory. Three United Nations experts have warned that Bill C-7 will violate international human rights conventions to which Canada is a signatory. Canadian legal experts warn that Bill C-7 will violate the Charter rights of persons with disabilities. People with disabilities, including in particular those who are marginalized, Black, Indigenous, racialized and poor, have warned that Bill C-7 will undermine their dignity and put their very lives at risk.

The minister is using closure. He is saying that there is consensus. That is simply not true. Will the minister please understand that this is a final deadline for many people to choose this. Could he please reconsider?

**Hon. David Lametti:** Madam Speaker, again, these are the kinds of arguments that we have been hearing in this House with respect to Bill C-7 generally, and the member's party has fixated on them. The fact of the matter is that we consulted widely with the leadership of disability groups.

Nobody is forced to get MAID. We, as a government, have invested in a dignified life, and we are going to continue to invest in resources for the disabled and for mental health.

We have disagreed with the opinions offered with respect to the bill's constitutionality. I believe it is constitutional and that it is in fundamental agreement with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Also, I believe that there are fundamental errors in the report from

### *Government Orders*

the United Nations in the way it has characterized the legislation. Nobody is forcing people with disabilities to get MAID.

• (1535)

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the minister is debating the reasons he is supporting the bill, yet what we are talking about right now is whether parliamentarians have had the time to speak fully on it.

The allotted time that the minister is mentioning includes debate previous to the Senate amendments. We have not fully debated the Senate amendments and allowed members who wish to do so to represent their communities. My phones and email have been flooded over the last few days. This is likely one of the most important bills that this Parliament will be dealing with, so I implore the minister to allow us the time to properly debate it.

**Hon. David Lametti:** Madam Speaker, I would remind the member that it was her party that on three occasions this past week refused the opportunity to debate the Senate amendments to this bill by refusing to extend hours and by refusing to leave their dilatory tactics aside on other pieces of legislation.

If the member has to explain to her constituents why she perhaps feels she did not have a chance, she will have to explain that her party leader failed to exercise the leadership necessary in order to use the very valuable time that we as parliamentarians have available to discuss this bill properly.

That said, I think there is a large consensus here, which we have seen across Canada and on committee, and we will continue to move forward in this next step.

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Madam Speaker, I have some concerns. This is a very important bill, as many other MPs have stated. This is a matter of life and death and very difficult decisions. I have some difficulty with the Senate amendments, and I would appreciate more time to discuss them. I wonder if the minister feels comfortable having an unelected body making amendments to such an important piece of legislation.

We have discussed the bill. We have had expert testimony from witnesses who have come before committee. Now we have these changes, and I think there is a lack of time to consider them carefully. I am wondering if the minister is comfortable with an unelected body making these changes in such a—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. minister.

**Hon. David Lametti:** Madam Speaker, I am indeed comfortable. For perhaps the first time since the beginning of Confederation, we have a Senate that is doing its job in a very robust, thoughtful and meaningful way. The Senate as well heard expert witnesses, studied the bill and did a prestudy of the bill. The Senate also discussed this bill in a relatively non-partisan way, and that even included Conservative members of the Senate, which, frankly, was heartwarming.

*Government Orders*

We thoughtfully reacted to the amendments proposed by the Senate and we believe we are moving forward with a reasonable package of amendments that have the large consensus of Canadians. We think this is the best step forward. The things that are left are things we can discuss as parliamentarians in the appropriate fashion over the next two years.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** Madam Speaker, some members seem to be forgetting that, in addition to the sensitive issues that will be sent to an expert panel and a committee in the next 30 days for review, Bill C-7 contains a number of other improvements.

The bill enables terminally ill patients to give final consent right away without waiting 10 days. It also makes it possible to respond to the situation of people like Ms. Carter, Ms. Parker, Ms. Gladu and Mr. Truchon, who received medical assistance in dying. Patients who are terminally ill are suffering, and they are waiting for us to take action. Bill C-7 already makes that change. The court said that, if we did not give these people the opportunity to be heard, then we were violating their right to life. Bill C-7 resolves that issue.

Does the minister believe that the panel will be set up in the next 30 days? Will the panel continue to work on the issue regardless of whether an election is called? Members of the panel in question will be able to work with other stakeholders. At least that will enable us to make progress on this issue. In a year—

• (1540)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but time is running out and other members want to ask questions.

The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Hon. David Lametti:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Montcalm.

I completely agree with his observations on Bill C-7 and the proposed benefits for Canadians across the country. During the consultations, there was a consensus in that regard to truly lessen people's suffering.

I have no doubt that the expert panel will do its job. It will be set up within 30 days, as called for in the motion. I am sure that the work will be done over the next year as planned.

[English]

**Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC):** Madam Speaker, unfortunately, we heard the minister use the word “consensus” over and over again in the last little while. The fact is that when he appeared before the justice committee on Bill C-7, he said there was no consensus to include mental illness. When he went to the Senate and spoke there, he said there was no consensus in the medical community or in Canada on the issue of mental illness.

He is now showing complete contempt for Parliament by having no debate and no study at committee and complete contempt for those in the mental illness community and those in the suicide prevention community. They include such groups as Inclusion Canada, the Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship, the DisAbled

Women's Network, the Council of Canadians with Disabilities and the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action.

Hundreds of organizations have signed a letter asking members of Parliament to please vote against the inclusion of mental illness in Bill C-7. Why is the minister putting the cart before the horse? We need to first study this legislation before moving forward.

**Hon. David Lametti:** Madam Speaker, I congratulated the hon. member earlier today for his tone at committee. I wish I could do the same now.

I am not showing contempt for Parliament or the House of Commons. What I am doing is showing respect for a parliamentary committee process that will come to a reasonable conclusion and put in reasonable safeguards with respect to mental illness.

I have always admitted that this is a difficult issue and that I have heard, on both sides, experts saying that we either could or could not. After the intervention of the Senate and its report, its hearing of witnesses and its latent expertise, I am confident that we can move forward with confidence as parliamentarians maintaining the final ability to create the structures that we need to safeguard the process.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate that this is a very difficult subject for many parliamentarians and Canadians. It also invokes many deep feelings of conscience. Personally, I am in favour of medical assistance in dying and support Canadians' rights and constitutional rights to access that, but I also know a flawed bill when I see one and I also know when the majority of the Canadian public is very concerned about a bill.

I was somewhat shocked to hear the minister use the word “consensus”. I think he said that there is a consensus among the Canadian public about this bill. That is the furthest thing from the truth. I am hearing from disability rights groups across this country that have not been consulted and are deeply concerned about this bill.

He also says this bill is constitutional. He said that about the other iterations of this bill, after the Carter decision in which Liberal adventurism resulted in another unconstitutional law.

Will the minister heed the call of Canadians and give parliamentarians the right to do a proper study of this bill and make sure this flawed legislation is corrected?

**Hon. David Lametti:** Madam Speaker, I share the hon. member's concern. He will recall that in 2016 I thought that bill was unconstitutional and my fears were borne out by the Quebec Superior Court.

I want to assure the hon. member that the bill does have the large consensus of Canadians. I also want to assure him, as I have pointed out on a number of different occasions, that we did a great deal of consultation, including with people representing people living with disabilities and the leadership of that group. I did much of that personally, and the bill reflects that in its very structure.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division 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 would request a recorded division on this.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Call in the members.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 70*)

#### YEAS

##### Members

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| Alghabra                 | Amos              |
| Anand                    | Anandasangaree    |
| Arseneault               | Arya              |
| Badawey                  | Bagnell           |
| Bains                    | Baker             |
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| Beaulieu                 | Beech             |
| Bendayan                 | Bennett           |
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| Dhillon                  | Dong              |
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| Erskine-Smith            | Fergus            |
| Fillmore                 | Finnigan          |
| Fisher                   | Fonseca           |

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Gerretsen  
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Holland  
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Iacono  
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Mendicino  
Miller  
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Perron  
Plamondon  
Ratansi  
Robillard  
Rogers  
Sahota (Brampton North)  
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Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Simms  
Spengemann  
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Petitpas Taylor  
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| Block                                    | Boulerice                                |
| Bragdon                                  | Brassard                                 |
| Calkins                                  | Cannings                                 |
| Carrie                                   | Chiu                                     |
| Chong                                    | Collins                                  |
| Cooper                                   | Cumming                                  |
| Dalton                                   | Dancho                                   |
| Davidson                                 | Davies                                   |
| Deltell                                  | d'Entremont                              |
| Diotte                                   | Doherty                                  |
| Dowdall                                  | Dreeschen                                |
| Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Duval                                    |
| Epp                                      | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)          |
| Falk (Provencher)                        | Fast                                     |
| Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)        | Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)               |
| Gallant                                  | Garrison                                 |
| Gazan                                    | Généreux                                 |
| Genuis                                   | Gladu                                    |
| Godin                                    | Gourde                                   |
| Gray                                     | Green                                    |
| Hallan                                   | Harder                                   |
| Harris                                   | Hoback                                   |
| Jansen                                   | Jeneroux                                 |
| Johns                                    | Julian                                   |
| Kelly                                    | Kent                                     |
| Kitchen                                  | Kmiec                                    |
| Kram                                     | Kurek                                    |
| Kusie                                    | Kwan                                     |
| Lake                                     | Lawrence                                 |
| Lehoux                                   | Lewis (Essex)                            |
| Liepert                                  | Lloyd                                    |
| Lobb                                     | Lukowski                                 |
| MacGregor                                | MacKenzie                                |
| Maguire                                  | Manly                                    |
| Martel                                   | Masse                                    |
| Mathysen                                 | May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)               |
| Mazier                                   | McCauley (Edmonton West)                 |
| McColeman                                | McKay                                    |
| McLean                                   | McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)       |
| McPherson                                | Melillo                                  |
| Moore                                    | Morantz                                  |
| Morrison                                 | Nater                                    |
| O'Toole                                  | Patzer                                   |
| Paul-Hus                                 | Poillievre                               |
| Qaqqaq                                   | Rayes                                    |
| Redekopp                                 | Reid                                     |
| Rempel Garner                            | Richards                                 |
| Rood                                     | Ruff                                     |
| Sahota (Calgary Skyview)                 | Saroya                                   |
| Scheer                                   | Schmale                                  |
| Seeback                                  | Shields                                  |
| Shin                                     | Shipley                                  |
| Singh                                    | Sloan                                    |
| Soroka                                   | Stanton                                  |
| Steinley                                 | Strahl                                   |
| Stubbs                                   | Sweet                                    |
| Tochor                                   | Uppal                                    |
| Van Popta                                | Vecchio                                  |
| Vidal                                    | Viersen                                  |
| Vis                                      | Wagantall                                |
| Warkentin                                | Waugh                                    |
| Webber                                   | Williamson                               |
| Wilson-Raybould                          | Wong                                     |
| Yurdiga                                  | Zimmer — 148                             |

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

## MOTION IN RELATION TO SENATE AMENDMENTS

The House resumed from February 23 consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), and of the amendment.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has 13 minutes remaining in debate.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I can appreciate the gravity of the debate that has been taking place on this very important piece of legislation. It is nothing new to members, no matter what side of the aisle they are on. Those who have been around for the last four or five years have literally seen hundreds, if not thousands, of hours of debate and discussion when we factor in what has taken place in the Senate and its committees, the hours of debate in second reading and third reading, the committee hearings and the special committee hearings.

An amazing amount of consultation has taken place, in particular, with the current minister responsible for the legislation. I know the parliamentary secretary to this particular ministry has done a phenomenal job in terms of reaching out and explaining the many complicated aspects of this legislation, and comparing it with what had taken place previously.

The issue of medical assistance in dying has been on the floor of the House and in our communities for years. We are in this position now because of a specific superior court ruling from the province of Quebec. I think the deadline is now the end of the month. This is the second or third, and final, extension, as has been made very clear. I believe that we need to have legislation dealing with medical assistance in dying and that it needs to comply with our courts. I very much support the rule of law in our democratic system.

I understand there are extremes on either side of the issue. There are those who, for personal and passionate reasons, believe that we should not have the legislation and those who, for personal and passionate reasons, believe that we have to have the legislation. I have chosen the side of supporting the legislation. I made that determination for a number of reasons. I respect the debates that have taken place over the years. I have seen tears on the floor of the House of Commons as MPs plead their position on MAID, at times with a great deal of passion. It is not easy for many, if not all, members of Parliament to ultimately make that determination.



We have heard from our constituents by email, by Canada Post, by telephone and by public meeting. Many of our constituents are following this issue and want us to make a decision from their viewpoint. What I have often found when speaking to constituents is that they understand why we are in the position we are in today. Some would ultimately not want to see this legislation pass, period. They are prepared to use whatever mechanisms they can. I am referring, in particular, to members of the official opposition. They will take whatever actions they can to prevent the passage of this legislation.

• (1635)

When asking a question of the Minister of Justice earlier, I indicated I had listened to many hours of debate on this issue, and I had posed questions to other members.

Let it be put on the record clearly that I believe there are members within the Conservative caucus who do not want this legislation to pass, period. End of story. As a whole, the Conservative Party has taken the position that it wants to continue debate and has somehow drawn the conclusion that it is inappropriate for the government to move closure. I want to highlight two aspects of that, because I think it is very misleading for the Conservatives to try to give the impression in any way that the Government of Canada has not been listening to Canadians, or is trying to ram through legislation.

First, we are in a minority government. We could not be doing this without the support of a majority of the members sitting in the House of Commons. That means that many opposition members are supporting the need to allow this legislation to come to a vote. I suspect, when it does come to a vote, that some of the Conservatives who voted against allowing it to come to a vote will vote in favour of the legislation, so the Conservatives are using the rules to try to prevent that. It is important to recognize that it is not just the government saying the official opposition is being irresponsible with respect to this legislation.

Second, the Conservatives are saying they want more debate and that is what this is all about. They do not want the government to bring in closure. That is just not true. That is not the case. I do not believe that for a moment. Those who are following the debate need to understand and appreciate that the Conservative Party of Canada was offered not once, not twice, but on three separate occasions the opportunity to continue to debate this issue for hours on the floor of the House of Commons. The Conservatives said no to every opportunity they were provided for additional debate. That clearly demonstrates that the Conservative Party is not interested in having more debate time; rather, it wants to filibuster this legislation. In one sense, the Conservatives would be very happy if we debated this bill every day. If we accommodated their so-called desire, they would criticize us for not having more debate on other government bills.

There is a finite amount of time on the floor of the House of Commons. In my opinion, the Conservative Party continues to abuse the opportunity to allow for healthy debate. With Bill C-7, we are talking about life and death. There are examples I could give that further show what I believe has been a very destructive attitude

by the Conservative Party of Canada when it comes to the proceedings in the House.

• (1640)

If it were not for shaming the Conservative Party of Canada, some of the legislation and other things that have taken place in the last 24 hours would not have occurred. If Canadians understood the tactics the Conservative Party is using, I believe they would be outraged.

Today is about life or death and Bill C-7. On other occasions, and I would cite Bill C-14 as an excellent example, there were hours and days of debate. I suspect there were probably more days of debate on Bill C-14 than there were on a budget bill, and more speakers than on a budget bill. Conservatives wanted to talk it out. I believe we finally got it through because they were shamed into doing so.

Bill C-7, as I indicated at the beginning, concerns a complex and deeply personal issue. It is about reducing suffering, among other things. In previous debates on this issue, I have shared with the House my own experiences of the passing of my father at Riverview and of my grandmother in palliative care at St. Boniface Hospital.

In these debates, there has been a great deal of discussion about what else we could do. For example, the importance of hospice care and the issues of long-term care, recognizing the federal government has a role to play in those areas—

• (1645)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Unfortunately the hon. member's time is up, but I am sure he will be able to add to his speech during his 10 minutes of questions and comments.

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

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we are debating a particular amendment that would allow facilitated suicide through the medical system for people struggling with depression and other forms of mental illness, and the member speaking did not address that whatsoever in his remarks.

The government is framing its approach to this issue as some kind of open-ended consultation, but it is not an open-ended consultation. If the amendment passes that government members want to concur with from the Senate, then the existing provisions on facilitated medical suicide for those struggling with mental health challenges will expire in two years regardless of whether the House has legislated it.

The House is welcome to study this issue, but why is the government not supporting our amendment, which would ensure people with mental health challenges were not automatically falling off a proverbial legislative cliff in two years? Why not support our amendment to these Senate amendments so the issue can be studied and legislated on in a reasonable time frame without the guillotine coming down?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, as I indicated, I have listened to many, many hours of debate on the specific amendment the member is making reference to, as well as the wider aspects of the legislation. I can recall some members, even within the Conservative Party, talking about the importance of wording and the messaging sent out.

It is irresponsible for any member to say the government is trying to facilitate suicide. That is not an appropriate thing to be tying to the legislation, and I think many of my colleagues would suggest it is very insensitive. This is a very complex and deeply personal issue. I do not think a generalization of that nature does anything to contribute to a healthy debate on the matter at hand.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, our Conservative colleagues do not seem to share our view that the role of the state in an issue as personal as someone's death is not to decide for Canadians what is best for them, but to preserve those conditions which allow them to exercise their freedom of choice and make a free and informed decision.

The Conservatives are very concerned about the protection of people with disabilities and about the state of palliative care. The government's motion provides that a committee will study precisely the points they are concerned about.

Can my colleague tell me why the Conservatives refuse to come to the table, responsibly and in good faith, to rationally discuss the points that matter most to them in a process that could result in a broad consensus?

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, if I may, I would just acknowledge and recognize my colleague, and thank him for supporting the need to seek closure, as his party has recognized that we do have a Superior Court of Quebec decision with a deadline. It is important for us to deal with this.

To answer the member's question a little more directly, there is a certain element within the Conservative Party, as I tried to point out, that has no intention, if it could, of ever allowing this legislation see the light of day. I believe that there are some Conservatives who want to see this legislation. Now the issue has been kicked off to the House leadership team and is being manipulated to a certain degree as a tool. That is most unfortunate and one of the reasons it was necessary for us to bring in closure.

● (1650)

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP):** Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary mentioned thousands of hours of debate around Bill C-14 and Bill C-7.

Would the member not agree that, in comparison, when we are talking about this amendment about mental health or those who are mentally ill having access to MAID, that such a little amount of time has been given to debate such a large expansion of the definition of MAID?

Could the member comment on the discrepancy between the thousands of hours that went into the beginning stages of this bill and the short timeframe we have been given for this new piece of

legislation that is a critical component that, I think, we need more time for?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question. I suspect that if we were to review the last 12 months, we would see that tens of thousands of Canadians have been engaged and that a wide range of things both in and outside the legislation were covered. There have been health experts and other stakeholders who have come before the House of Commons and the Senate. I believe we will continue to have opportunities in the future to look at ways to improve the legislation.

However, the current legislation, as it is with the amendments, will in fact not only meet the Superior Court's decision, but also be closer to Canadian societal mores.

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, with respect to the last comment, the consultations included 300,000 Canadians reaching out online, and many meetings conducted around the country by the three ministers, me, and two other parliamentary secretaries, where we heard from stakeholders, including persons with disabilities.

I want to touch on the parliamentary secretary's experience in the House and ask him how he interprets what I see as a bit of double standard. We have had the Conservative justice critic state in the *Telegraph-Journal* in New Brunswick that we need to have extended hours for debate. Yet, to the point made by the member from the Green Party, when the proposition was put to the Conservatives on three occasions for extending debate on these very Senate amendments, it was turned down.

How does the parliamentary secretary reconcile those two positions?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, it is really important for anyone who is following the debate to recognize exactly what the Conservative Party has done here.

On the one hand, the Conservatives are saying that they want to have more debate. On the other hand, they are not allowing that additional debate. It makes no sense at all, unless they are using it as a destructive tool in the House against the legislative agenda of the government. To me, that is a fairly pathetic thing to be doing on such important legislation, using this as a tool to frustrate the government.

The Conservatives have been offered the opportunity for additional debate, and on three separate occasions they have said no on the floor of the House of Commons.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to address what the parliamentary secretary just said, because what has actually happened here is that the Senate has made significant amendments to this bill. It is a completely different bill from what was sent to it. The proper way of looking at it would be to have a committee before this bill is made into law. They want to reverse it.

What is really important for people with mental illness is that they be heard. The minister has said that he has a consensus. I have a letter from 129 organizations that support people with disabilities in the community. If the minister has a consensus, can he name one organization for people with disabilities that supports his position? I just want one.

• (1655)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, it is important that we recognize the motivation of the Conservative Party. We saw their motivation back in December when they started the whole process of delay, and yes, it ultimately did pass and did go to the Senate. It has come back. Now the Conservatives see another opportunity.

In the minds of some Conservatives, I think they are genuine, but the Conservative House leadership team providing leadership on this, I think, is using it as a manipulative tool to frustrate the government's legislative agenda in the House. That is inexcusable.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Before I go to resuming debate, I want to mention something that has happened a couple of times today, when individuals who are attending virtually have put their hands up while they are on the telephone. That takes away time from other individuals who want to ask questions. I would just recommend that if a member plans to put their hand up, please do not be on the phone because it does take time to be excused from that call.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Oshawa.

**Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Madam Speaker, it has been very interesting to hear the Liberal speakers today on this sad day when the Liberals have brought in closure on what is a very important life-or-death amendment from the Senate, and to hear the Liberals spinning their wheels and making up excuses and pretending that past studies on other bills dealing with medical assistance in dying somehow should be taken and counted in support of the huge expansion suggested by the Senate, which has only had a very few hours of consideration in the House before this closure motion today.

For those who are watching, closure by the government means that members of Parliament will not be able to further debate or further study the application of medical assistance in dying to those suffering with mental illness.

It is important to have a bit of context on this because when the Minister of Justice appeared at our justice committee when we were studying this bill, we did not hear from those in the community dealing with suicide prevention and with mental illness because that was not an aspect of the bill. The minister at the time said that there was no consensus in Canada when it comes to mental illness, and there was no consensus among physicians when it comes to mental illness; yet now, a few months later, the Liberals are ramming this through today in a very unfortunate and contemptuous way.

I expect that desperation we hear in the voices of Liberal members is because they are getting the same emails, phone calls and messages that the rest of us are getting. These messages are from

### *Government Orders*

those who are fighting for vulnerable people, those who are fighting for people with depression and people suffering from mental illness, saying, "Please do not pass this Senate, and now Liberal government, amendment".

From the beginning the government has mismanaged this issue. The Liberals say that Bill C-7 was originally aimed at responding to the Quebec Superior Court decision from 2019. Conservatives, at the time, said very clearly that the government should defend its law and should have appealed this decision to the Supreme Court of Canada. Instead, the Minister of Justice, who himself voted against Bill C-14 on medical assistance in dying because it did not go far enough, saw this as an opportunity to rapidly expand the medical assistance in dying regime under the cover of responding to that Quebec court decision.

I disagree with the position of the Liberals not to appeal this to the Supreme Court. As the Conservatives said, that would have given Parliament clarity on how to legislate going forward. However, the Liberals took the highly unusual approach of not defending their own legislation. If the Liberals simply wanted to respond to the Quebec court decision, they would and could have done that. They chose not to do that. Instead, today, they are trying to ram through this bill that goes dramatically beyond that. It is very clear that the Liberal government sees the work of Parliament as a nuisance and that anything other than complete acceptance of its legislation must be opposed.

When this bill was first introduced just over a year ago, it was done one week after the government had already asked for its first extension from the Quebec court decision. Therefore, the Liberals were already failing to meet the court deadline that they said was their goal. Then, rather than introduce a bill that simply addressed the Quebec court decision, the Liberals introduced a far more expansive bill that requires a significantly greater amount of scrutiny by Parliament.

Under Bill C-14, the government's original MAID legislation, a legislative review was required five years after the bill received royal assent. That was scheduled to take place last year. This review would have looked at the impacts of Bill C-14 and would have provided insight on how to proceed forward. Let me be clear: Rather than allow Parliament to do that work first, the government decided to expand MAID legislation in Bill C-7. Again, rather than simply responding to the court decision and allowing Parliament to do the work necessary to study this issue, the Liberals overreacted and brought in expansive new legislation.

### *Government Orders*

The government ended up receiving an extension from March 11 to July 11, 2020, and, with the COVID outbreak, Parliament's scrutiny was limited for a number of months. As time ticked toward July 11, it was apparent that yet again the Liberals would not be able to ram their bill through Parliament, and another extension was requested on June 11, this time for December 18, 2020. When Parliament eventually resumed in September 2020, we could have had the opportunity to debate Bill C-7, but of course we were, ironically, prevented from doing so by the Liberals who are now so keen on passing Bill C-7, because they prorogued Parliament, wiping the legislative slate clean. We all know this was done to avoid scrutiny of the WE scandal to protect the Prime Minister and other senior members of cabinet.

• (1700)

Based on the communications over the past couple of days, one would expect that the Liberals may have had a sense of urgency to reintroduce Bill C-7, instead they did not introduce Bill C-7 again in the first week or the second week. It took the Liberals until the third week of Parliament after they prorogued to actually reintroduce Bill C-7.

The Liberals have set themselves up time and time again to miss their own deadlines, and they have set themselves up for failure, but now there is this rapid rush. However, as has been pointed out, this is an entirely new bill that has come back from the Senate because it includes what was explicitly excluded by our House of Commons, which is made up of elected members of Parliament from all across this country. The mental illness component was specifically and deliberately excluded, and now it is being added in.

By including mental illness as a sole underlying condition to be eligible for MAID, the government wants to expand MAID even further in a way that is a complete 180° turn from Bill C-7 as it was introduced a year ago. This is a completely different bill than was originally debated in the House. As the vice-chair of the justice committee, I know we did not seek to hear from experts on this topic because the government's bill explicitly said expanding medical death to those with mental illness was not being considered. Now, at this last stage of the bill, the government is recklessly accepting a dramatic expansion of the bill, an expansion to which the Minister of Justice himself said there was no consensus.

What are people saying on this mental illness issue? It is unfortunate because Canadians are not going to be able to be engaged and participate in this conversation before we vote on the matter tonight. However, for those of us who are listening, the CEO of the Mental Health Association sounded alarm bells in an article urging all members of Parliament to please vote against the Senate amendments. Her point in the article is that MAID should not be broadened to those with mental illness until at least the health care system adequately responds to mental health needs of Canadians.

She highlights that it is not possible to determine whether any particular case of mental illness represents an advance state of decline and capabilities that cannot be reversed. She concluded her article writing, "We have to cure our ailing mental health system in Canada before we even begin to consider mental illness incurable."

In a CBC, Dr. Mark Sinyor, a psychiatrist and associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Toronto recently wrote, "As a sci-

entist, I have to be open to the possibility that all of the claims advanced by MAID advocates are accurate. But enacting law, one which literally governs life or death decisions, based on a possibility isn't good enough."

He continued, "In other areas of medicine, thoughtful scientists typically devote whole careers to meticulously studying benefits and harms of treatments before rolling them out. Here, that proven approach has inexplicably been replaced with hand-waving and moralizing."

We know that it is our job as members of Parliament to study these things and hear about them at committee from experts, those that are directly impacted, before passing new legislation. We heard this week at a press conference from Wayne Wegner. He told his story of struggling with mental illness. Wayne had a series of difficulties in life that led him to a very dark place, and he urged members of Parliament to please vote against this legislation.

In conclusion, this is not how we should be operating. We should not be dealing with closure today. We should be listening to persons with disabilities and persons suffering from mental illness issues and their advocates. We should all do our jobs as members of Parliament and listen first before we act. That is our duty.

• (1705)

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his contributions. To begin, I do not think we are going to apologize for not only responding to Truchon, but also expanding on the regime to address the Audrey Parker amendment, which is critical for Atlantic Canadians and all Canadians.

Second, we did hear, and the member opposite knows this, at committee from Dr. Gupta, Dr. Gaiind and other people on the mental illness issue.

Third, I take strong opposition to the member saying, which I wrote down, "the government deems the work of Parliament is a nuisance". That is absolutely illogical when we are entertaining the acceptance of three amendments by the Senate, a chamber of Parliament, showing that the work of Parliament is not only venerated, it is validated.

I would like to point out to the member opposite the logical inconsistency of his own statements to the *Telegraph-Journal* in his own province when he said that we need to sit evenings and weekends to deal with the very important amendments that have been suggested, but then his party did an about-face in rejecting three different opportunities to do just that.

Could the member please respond?

**Hon. Rob Moore:** Madam Speaker, as the parliamentary secretary knows, even as late as today at the justice committee, Liberals rejected an opportunity for us to hear from mental illness professionals, from those who would be impacted by this legislation, and that is our job. We are listening.

I received a letter signed by 129 organizations, such as Inclusion Canada, the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association and the DisAbled Women's Network. There are 129 organizations asking us to please support the Conservative amendment, and please do not include mental illness as a grounds for someone to receive assisted dying.

We need to listen to the experts first, and the parliamentary secretary knows that we have not done that. We had committee meetings on Bill C-7, but this was not part of Bill C-7 when we had those meetings.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I just want to let you know that the interpretation has not come through a few times now, so I do not hear you when you call on me. I am sorry.

My colleague wants us to keep studying this issue. I agree with him, but the motion before us would enable us to bring in the people he is talking about and engage in a multi-party thought process about the best solutions.

What does he have to say to Sandra Demontigny, who was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's and very much wants the right to make an advance request?

What does he have to say to Ms. Gladu, who had to take her fight to court and won in the end? Ms. Gladu said that Bill C-14, which the member voted against because it was too much for him, violated her right to life because it forced her to cut her life short.

What does he have to say to those people?

• (1710)

[English]

**Hon. Rob Moore:** Madam Speaker, as the hon. member would know or should know, as it is his party that is enabling the shutting down of debate today by supporting the Liberals' motion for closure, the minister has testified at the Senate that Alzheimer's and dementia is not included in the definition of mental illness, so this expansion by the Senate would now include people who are suffering from mental illness, suffering from severe depression, to be considered for medical assistance in dying.

Many of the individuals we have heard from are contacting our office and saying to please vote against this Senate amendment because it will have an impact on people like them who are suffering and are at a low point. We are sending the message that maybe their life is not worth living, and I know that is a message that parliamentarians do not want to send.

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I just want to see if the member for Montcalm is hearing the interpretation.

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**Mr. Luc Thériault:** Madam Speaker, when you recognize me, the interpretation stops because you are speaking French, so the sound cuts out and I do not hear you call on me. That is why there is a delay. When I do not hear anything, I assume you are recognizing me.

That is what I will do next time, and if it is not my turn to speak, just let me know.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Okay.

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

[English]

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I find myself more distressed today, after nearly six years of service in this House, than I have on any other day, in any other debate. With the Liberal government's closure motion limiting debate, stifling the people's representatives in the very place we are elected to to give voice to the voiceless, the egregious affront to public policy creation playing out before us, the terrible precedent this sets for the future and the abandonment of the vulnerable in our society, I am left with the echoes of persons with disabilities and those I know who have come out the other side of the suffering of mental illness. This will not be a legacy to be proud of.

What started out as a bill that many in my community could and did get behind, if proper safeguards stayed in place and if conscience rights were protected, has gone from a scenario of some hope to a bad dream, to a nightmare. We know where this is going. The Liberal government will recklessly bring in legislation that grievously affects those who are struggling with mental illness, add them to the list of Canadians struggling with other disabilities, and say, "For you, fellow Canadians, for you, our most vulnerable, we have an exit plan, one we know you may not agree with, but one we have decided is best for you and society as a whole."

How dare they? How dare the Liberals propose to abandon these Canadians? How dare the parliamentary secretary question my motivation or the motivations of my constituents? They are changing our legislative landscape without proper debate, without even allowing the justice committee to hear witnesses and without the legislated mandatory review that the government has ignored. I tell my colleagues to stop and consider that their actions fly in the face of testimony that has already been heard in committee, coercion does exist and not all Canadians are treated with equal dignity.

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The Minister of Justice testified at committee today that his party members have been given a free vote, so it is up to each person elected to this place to be counted. The minister also stated that he will create a committee of experts to study the sensitive issues before us after this Senate-amended bill is voted on. If it is that important, if there is no consensus, as the minister previously stated, why would we pass an appointed Senate's version of a life or death bill? Why would we not give the proper thought and hear from the experts first?

To those whose sole underlying condition is mental illness, why are they not worthy of being heard? When they are at their lowest in terms of coping with their lives, why should MAID be what is suggested to them? Why not suggest hope, or comfort, or a path to recovery? Where is the funding for this? Where is the debate on this? Where is our humanity?

I have had times in my life when I suffered from what is termed situational depression, which is a recognized mental illness diagnosis not due to an underlying chemical imbalance but to a coping challenge brought about by my situation at that time, when my husband suddenly died, leaving me with small children to raise on my own, and when my baby son died.

Life can be very tough at times. When people are in the grips of depression, they do believe that the world, and even those who depend on them for their fundamentals, would be better off without them. These ideations can be, and in my case were, transient, but I needed time and support to find my bearings again. What of those who have just suffered a catastrophic injury?

As a member of the justice committee, I studied this bill very closely, or at least a bill by the same name. In committee, we considered the impacts of expanding MAID to Canadians whose death is not imminent and the efficacy of removing many safeguards that were put in place in the original MAID regime in 2016, such as the requirement for two witnesses and 10-day reflection period. What we did not review is expanding assisted dying where the sole underlying condition is mental illness.

• (1715)

Whether members generally support the bill or not, and even if they support this specific Senate amendment, they cannot deny this: As elected representatives whose constituents rely on us to do our work in a measured, intelligent and compassionate way, we are not being given the opportunity to study this expansion and hear from those who are directly affected.

What of the experts who may assist us? We are told we will hear from them later. Will we, or will the government ignore the review mandate, just as it ignored the first one?

Is this our process now? Is this how Canada's Parliament creates good defensible public policy, with no diligent consultation and no close review of the implications? Are we just going to wing it now? Are we not going to challenge amendments from the Senate that fundamentally change this bill or other bills? This amendment would make Canada's assisted dying regime by far the most permissive on the planet.

The minister stated today that we were always going to study this very complex change carefully and look at it with the help of experts, yet here we are voting it into law and even closing down debate. How does this work?

I do agree with the minister's other statement today that we are parliamentarians and we have a responsibility. Yes, we are, and yes, we do.

Why not study this at committee? The Conservatives brought forward a motion to sit next week during a constituency week to study this. This motion was voted down. Minister Lametti also stated this morning that the Senate—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I remind the hon. member not to mention the ministers by their names.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, the minister also stated this morning that the Senate, for perhaps the first time, is actually doing its work and acting as a place of sober second thought. That is not what this is. The Senate did not just tweak this bill; it entirely changed its scope, affecting the lives of millions of Canadians.

If members think I am exaggerating, a simple online search shows that one in five Canadians experiences a mental illness or addiction problem at any given time, that 70% of mental health problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence and that those under 24 years of age are particularly affected. By the time Canadians reach 40, one in two has had a mental illness.

It was bad enough when the Liberals seemingly ignored calls for more safeguards from nearly every advocacy group for Canadians with disabilities, but to not even review this complex expansion is an offensive abandonment of responsibility. The Liberals' willingness to run with it is a complete 180° about-face.

On November 3, the Minister of Justice said at committee:

Bill C-7 proposes to exclude persons whose sole medical condition is a mental illness.... Experts disagree on whether medical assistance in dying can ever be safely made available in such cases...unpredictable illness trajectories mean there is always the possibility of improvement and recovery.... The exclusion gives Parliament more time to reflect on this complex question, which is fraught with serious risks....

Was this Senate amendment always part of the Liberal plan? Do we not need more time and more reflection?

The appointed Senate has entirely overreached and overstepped its mandate. Every member who votes in favour of this amended bill today should really think hard. I do not say this because I do not agree with their policy preferences. I have policy disagreements with members of my own party. However, this is no longer a discussion about policy. This is about fulfilling our role as parliamentarians. To vote in support of a bill fundamentally amended by an unelected Senate without review is an abdication of responsibility.

Today marks the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given everything Canadians have gone through in the last year, how can we today, of all days, pass this law without study? There is still time to wake up from this nightmare before the bells ring. As John Donne famously wrote, “Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.”

• (1720)

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for South Surrey—White Rock for her contributions at committee and for her contributions today through the deeply heartfelt and very personal speech she just gave. However, I take issue with some of the points she raised.

First, with respect to coercion, the evidence indicates that no discipline or prosecution has taken place against any doctor or nurse in this country in the five years we have had MAID. Second, the notion that we would have the most permissive regime on the planet should these amendments pass is speculative. We know, for example, that the safeguards we would put in place are yet to be determined and that in the Benelux countries, for example, minors can avail themselves of medical assistance in dying. That is not on the table here.

No one takes issue with the fact that we need supports for people who have a mental illness, but I would ask the member opposite to comment on the Truchon case. As she is a lawyer, I know she reads jurisprudence, just as I do.

In the Truchon case, the court said that people with disabilities need to have the autonomy and competence to make decisions about their lives and—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Unfortunately, there is very limited time for questions and comments. I ask members to keep them to one minute.

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, I am a lawyer, as is the hon. member, but one of my fundamental disagreements with how this has proceeded is that the Truchon decision was a Quebec Superior Court decision, a court of first instance, in fact. It did not go to the Quebec Court of Appeal, nor did it go to the Supreme Court of Canada. It could have even gone to the Supreme Court of Canada by way of reference, but the government did not do that. The plaintiffs in the Truchon case do not speak for all persons with disabilities, as we clearly heard at committee.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I hate to say it, but listening to the Conservatives, I am left with the impres-

sion that they are exploiting the realities of persons with disabilities.

Who is more vulnerable than someone living with an irreversible medical condition, who is suffering intolerably and has reached their tolerance threshold? Ms. Gladu lived her life, but she had a degenerative disease that affected her physical autonomy. She was experiencing intolerable suffering, but even in a wheelchair, she was able to go to court and assert her moral autonomy.

I do not understand why the member is unwilling to come and discuss her concerns in a parliamentary committee to try to pinpoint exactly what her concerns are.

[English]

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, I find the hon. member’s question fundamentally offensive because he is not talking about process. He is not talking about dealing with the Senate amendment through a proper committee review. He is talking about an overall bill, which we are not really speaking about here today. We understand the overall issue of persons with disabilities clearly, and we understand what plaintiffs had to say and why they took their case to court. However, that is not what we are dealing with here today. To suggest that I do not care about them is nonsense.

• (1725)

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have an important question to ask my colleague.

We have heard some Liberals say that no one is being forced to choose MAID. I have had experiences in my life with people who are extremely depressed. Because the mental health system in this country is not there for them and is not supportive, sometimes they feel there is no choice. Now we have a government that wants to bring in an entirely new bill without proper debate and without allowing us to hear from the people who would be affected and the experts.

Could my colleague please comment on the idea of choice? If there is no choice, there is MAID.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, we heard from witnesses at the justice committee on this very issue. People with disabilities felt they had been coerced and that MAID had been inappropriately suggested. They said even though their quality of life may have, to the outside observer, not seemed full, it was full to them. What they were suffering from was a lack of support.

Let us put money into hospice care. Let us put money into helping those with mental illness. Let us help people, not put forward an amendment from an unelected Senate.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Yorkton—Melville.

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It is an honour to stand in the House today and give this speech on behalf of the constituents of Cypress Hills—Grasslands. This has been a very heavy issue for a lot of my constituents, and there has been a lot of engagement on it.

The Liberal government, already with many other scandals and failures, has hit an all-time low with the bill. The Liberals were already seeking to legally expand assisted suicide in ways that are unnecessary and uncalled for. However, now for Canadians everywhere, especially those with disabilities or mental health challenges and our medical professionals, the situation has suddenly gotten much worse.

The other place sent Bill C-7 back to us with some radical and outrageous amendments. They are unthinkable and should have been rejected immediately. Instead, the Liberals have accepted the unacceptable, and at the last stage of the process, they somehow thought to allow the bill to be made even more dangerous than it already was. They have been trying to rush it along ever since, and now they are shutting down debate after everyone has barely started to process what exactly is going on.

The Liberals have shown complete disregard and disrespect for the public, who are supposed to be represented in our democratic process. However, what is even more disturbing and offensive is the statement they are making to the people who are most at risk of suffering the consequences of their legislation. The message is already clear, not only in Canada but in the rest of the world.

We are supposed to be a place that cares about human life and dignity. We are supposed to be a country that leads the way and takes a principled stand for people's rights. This is Canada.

Before the government agreed to make Bill C-7 even worse, The Washington Post published an article about it entitled "Canada is plunging toward a human rights disaster for disabled people". In a way, it is more shocking to hear it from outside observers. This is a warning sign of where our country is headed. However, the point is not new. The article focuses on Roger Foley, who keeps fighting to survive and demands better from government and the health care system. He wants assisted life before he is ever offered assisted suicide.

Major disability organizations in Canada, which are now joined by mental health advocates, have been calling out the same discrimination and dangers involved. At the same time, the United Nations has specifically called out Canada for these same issues with MAID under the current law, never mind what the Liberals are bringing forward and what the Senate has put forward here now. Before the Truchon decision happened, the special rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities publicly stated:

I am extremely concerned about the implementation of the legislation on medical assistance in dying from a disability perspective. I have been informed that there is no protocol in place to demonstrate that persons with disabilities have been provided with viable alternatives when eligible for assistive dying. I have further received worrisome claims about persons with disabilities in institutions being pressured to seek medical assistance in dying....

Since then, a new person has filled the role of special rapporteur, who, while testifying on Bill C-7, said, "even if safeguards would be strengthened to ensure genuine consent, the damage is still done by portraying—not directly but effectively nonetheless—that the

lives of persons with disabilities are somehow worth less than others."

However, we are not even talking about stronger safeguards either here. The government is choosing to remove multiple safeguards for disabilities, and now for mental health because of the amendments that the Senate sent us. The problem is clear to different Canadians, regardless of whether they support the law currently in place for MAID. I have heard this from several members, even within my own party, for example. The problem is that we are not discussing MAID anymore, and these amendments have made that absolutely clear, if it was not before.

I recently finished reading the book *1984* by George Orwell. Some members will say this sounds cliché and exaggerated, but they need to pay more attention to the point he makes about double-speak and the meaning of words. If we twist the meaning of words, we subliminally change the values of society. If we do not say what we mean and mean what we say, we can easily lose sight of reality. What is worse, we can cover up harm and injustice.

We heard a Liberal minister defend Bill C-7 in a very telling way when he said, "Mental illness is a very serious illness. It is an illness. It needs to be treated as an illness. It was always going to be looked at in the second stage of the bill." This was in response to a question about the concern of mistreating Canadians with mental illness.

● (1730)

The Bell Let's Talk Day was not long ago, and there are several other initiatives for mental health throughout the year. Are we going to contradict the message we all unanimously used in the House back then as we were supporting people who were dealing with mental health or are we now going to think of suicide as treatment? Are we supposed to believe it is an option for improving someone's mental condition? I should hope actual treatments and care are provided and that suicide is actively prevented rather than offered, even as a last resort, for those who want to kill themselves but are not dying. This is no way to treat people who are suffering.

When people consider suicide, we offer them a help line. We reaffirm their value that their lives are worth living. Suicide prevention is already hard enough. How are we going to convince them? If this law passes and if it keeps us from reaching them in time, what message is that telling those people who are signalling that they have already lost hope and that this bill essentially offers them no further chance at hope? This new law and the tangled web it weaves will not make any sense whatsoever.



When the government first opened a Pandora's box for assisted suicide back in 2016, it said there would be a required review process in five years. Five years went by and it never happened. It would have been a perfect opportunity to address the growing concerns with the current law for MAID. The Liberals did not wait and they did not prioritize doing it before trying to expand the law in response to a provincial court ruling.

In case anyone forgot, Bill C-7 goes far beyond the actual decision of the court, which the Liberals claim is a time restraint even though they did not bother to appeal it in the first place. They are forcing us into last minute amendments with one afternoon, really, of debate; and that is it.

I do not believe these rules reflect the true Canadian spirit. They would silence too many voices and perspectives that deserve to be heard after ignoring them for the past year and more. The average Canadian does not find it hard to be horrified at these changes, especially when they have barely seen the light of public scrutiny. Whether we live with or love people with disabilities and mental health challenges or if we have the basic idea of respecting the dignity and value of our fellow human beings, the problems are obvious. Someone who for any reason is distressed by what this decision represents is apparently not worth the government's time or consideration.

The Liberals say they have run out of time, but they have failed to make time or give time to those who need it most. They are the ones who control the legislative calendar. It was up to them. It is a lot like getting stuck with a pushy sales rep who avoids questions while trying to make a quick sale. By now, Canadians are used to Liberal excuses for their incompetence, but it is becoming clearer than ever how some of their radical views on social issues try to get passed through unnoticed.

This is all the more reason why we needed to have a thorough review of the current law, which was promised but not kept. The government now says that it will accept one amendment, requiring a review after the bill comes into effect. We will have to see how that goes.

Despite all the frustration and discouragement coming forward from strong advocates and citizens, which I share right now, I still have hope in the human spirit for the future. If the government wants to take us backward and if its allies in Parliament turn a blind eye, it will not be able to stop the truth and justice from winning out. It makes me think of a line sung by Johnny Cash, "What's done in the dark will be brought to the light."

It is a shame that there will not be much longer to speak today, because there are so many more things that do need to be said about this important issue about these amendments from the Senate. Human life is worth far more than just a few minutes of debate and discussion.

• (1735)

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, this narrative of abandonment that we are hearing from Conservative interveners in today's debate is a bit concerning. The view of the court and the view of our government is that we are trying to

### *Government Orders*

empower individuals to make choices, including difficult choices. I commend to the member opposite the fact that Monsieur Truchon and Madame Gladu were persons with disability who were seeking constitutionally protected access to the MAID regime.

The notion that the amendments proposed by the Senate are radical and outrageous, to quote the member opposite, is false on its face. Collecting race-based data and other data about vulnerable communities accessing MAID is important. So too is having a joint study, which are two amendments to which we have agreed.

Does the member opposite agree and appreciate that we are not proposing to allow access to those with mental illness as a sole underlying condition, tomorrow or even next month, but only after a one-year review by an expert panel followed by a one-year review by Parliament, so Parliament can do the work that the member seeks to have done, which is test the safeguards to ensure that embarking in this area is done in a measured and appropriate manner that protects vulnerabilities?

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Madam Speaker, ultimately, all the sunset clause does is delay the inevitable. It is still signalling to these people, the people who are struggling with mental health and mental illness, that their life is not valuable. However, that is not true. Every single life matters and should be dignified. These amendments do not do that. They do not afford that and that is wrong.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, at this current juncture, the Bloc Québécois is far from convinced that MAID should be broadened to include individuals whose sole medical condition causing suffering is mental illness.

Why? Because suicidal ideation is often a manifestation, a symptom of mental illness, and suicidal ideation is reversible.

I do not understand how my colleague can confuse these two things and how the Conservatives' amendment can allude to the fact that reversible suicidal ideation is suddenly an inclusion criterion, while the real criteria are the irreversibility of the disease and intolerable suffering. Why are they getting these things mixed up?

We may have to give it more thought, and that is what the government's motion is challenging us to do. It is challenging us to think about the issue across party lines.

Is my colleague prepared to sit down, invite the people he wants to invite, and correctly define the issue and find a solution?

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If the expert panel and the special committee arrive at the conclusion that mental health should be excluded, it will be excluded. I do not see why they insist on remaining within the parliamentary framework of a debate which is getting us nowhere.

We need to think about this across party lines and reach a broader consensus. I am eager to hear what my colleague has to say in committee.

[English]

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Madam Speaker, the whole point is rather than rushing to include a sunset clause in legislation, let us have that conversation now. Why wait a year or two years? We need to have that now. That is the whole point of this debate. That is what we have been saying over and over. These amendments need to go to committee so that conversation can happen now.

My other point is that suicidal thoughts are reversible. He is absolutely right. The problem is that suicide and medical assistance in dying are not reversible, and that is the whole point. That is why so many people are concerned about this. We need to have these conversations now. It needs to go to committee now. Not in a year or two from now; it needs to take place now.

• (1740)

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, could my colleague comment on the hypocrisy of the government to be putting money toward suicide prevention and, at the same time, deciding it is not enough to let people kill themselves, but that they will get medical professionals to help them out when they have mental illness?

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Madam Speaker, when we watch a movie and a person is standing on a bridge, people are coming to help that person, to reaffirm the value of his or her life. Those people are not taking the person by the hand and leading him or her up to the bridge. No, they are trying to take the person off of the bridge, to walk the individual back from the edge.

I find it absolutely appalling that the government is doing what it is doing. I mentioned in my speech that we have had the Bell Let's Talk Day. We also voted on a motion in the House for the 988 suicide prevention hotline. Immediately after that, the House also voted in favour of Bill C-7. What are we trying to do? Do we support people or do we not?

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, as I begin my speech today, I am grieved to the core of my heart by the amendments from the other place that reveal an even greater lack of compassion for the most vulnerable in our society through expansion of Bill C-7 to those with mental illness. These amendments go well beyond what the House voted on last year and go well beyond the Truchon decision itself.

The Senate-Liberal Bill C-7 justifies a fulsome debate and more amendments in addition to the one introduced by my colleague from Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. I must respond to Canadians' alarm with the worrisome evolution of assisted suicide propagated by the other place and the Liberal government.

Opening the door to mental illness as a stand-alone reason to request assisted death is a frightening revelation of the lack of com-

passion and care for those who need and deserve it most. What is the underlying intent of such an outward attack on the value of the lives of vulnerable people? The message to those who face mental illness as well as those who have dedicated themselves to the care and treatment of anxiety, personality disorder, panic attacks, gender dysphoria, mood disorders, dissociative disorders, sleep disorders, on and on, is no longer a message of hope and "Let's talk".

Where is the merit in collecting race-based data when they ignore the pleas of indigenous leaders, palliative care and mental health professionals, physically and mentally disabled Canadians raising strong concern over the lengths gone to by both places to normalize and prioritize assisted suicide? It is this legislation in itself that will cause greater harm to the marginalized and the disadvantaged. A culture of suicide prevention is what we in this place should all strive for as caretakers of the people's business.

In a letter recently penned to federal and provincial parliamentarians as well as health care regulators, indigenous leaders, including Siksika Health Services' CEO Tyler White, former lieutenant governor of New Brunswick Graydon Nicholas, retired senator Nick Sibbeston, indigenous health and suicide prevention advisers and elders, the desire for a culture of assisted life is made clear, "Bill C-7 goes against many of our cultural values, belief systems, and sacred teachings. The view that MAiD is a dignified end for the terminally ill or those living with disabilities should not be forced on our peoples."

They are concerned that the government will not respect their indigenous beliefs and values by shutting down a palliative care facility. No doubt they should be concerned as this would not be the first example of a left-leaning government in Canada shutting down a palliative care facility, which also sought to stay true to its calling to provide a service perpetuated by a unique belief and values connection to their communities, a place where assisted suicide is not offered, a place to die a natural death with dignity.

They have called on the Liberals to respect their right to determine how health services are delivered in first nations communities. Indigenous leaders have been working tirelessly on strategies to combat the crisis of suicide in their communities. At the same time, the government is creating an environment that enables assisted suicide. The Liberal government is turning its back on indigenous people.

Renowned Dr. John Maher, an ACT psychiatrist specializing in the treatment of severe mental illness, was frank in his assessment of the proposed amendments. He has made clear that the long, drawn-out process of mental health treatment makes it irrational to offer or provide assisted death to patients. In his experience, not only is initial treatment expected to last up to three years in which symptoms are brought under control, but several more years need to be accounted for in order for patients to thrive under their condition. Dr. Maher is clear that not only is it possible for those who live with mental illness to survive, but they can live satisfying lives.

The Canadian Mental Health Association stated, “As a recovery-oriented organization, CMHA does not believe that mental illnesses are irremediable.” Psychiatrists, doctors, nurses and professors from the University of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Health Authority have expressed grave concern over the inclusion of mental illness as grounds to request assistance in dying. They appeal to the dedicated and wise leaders of our country to “please help protect the young people of Canada, our greatest resource for the future.” Today, we will see who the dedicated and wise leaders are.

Rather than champion hope for those suffering with mental illness and those who care for and provide treatment for their healing, the Liberal government hides behind an all-encompassing MAID regime. It cannot continue to offer suffering Canadians a skeleton of suicide prevention measures with one hand and an ever-expanding assisted death regime with the other.

• (1745)

As Dr. Maher has confirmed, better results can be realized through a culture of life and attentive treatment.

I had the personal privilege, and that is exactly what it was, an incredible privilege, to serve as a nurse’s aide in a long-term mental hospital, taking care of patients with very deep scars. I have given daily care to precious elderly residents in seniors homes and level 4 nursing homes. I have assisted students with special needs in elementary and high school education. Every experience has made me laugh and made me cry. Without any reservation, all these human beings have made such a significant difference in the quality and purpose of my life.

This bill is also deeply disturbing to veterans and their families. I have no desire to share their names here today or their personal experiences. Many are my personal friends. Those veterans who suffer with mental illness as a result of their service see this as another blow to their value to their country.

There has been an ongoing long-term lack of access to mental health care for themselves and their families, exacerbated by VAC’s downgrading of OSISS to an online service and its failure to replace coordinators who were on the ground with them, backlogs that mean the care they need is so far away that hope turns to despair, while mental health counselling for their spouses and children who are deeply impacted by their loved one’s injuries must prove that their treatment is required for the health of the veteran.

There are a growing number of suicides in our armed forces and veterans communities already. At a time when a culture of life and of accessible and timely treatments is what is needed, the government is sending them the opposite message.

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As I close, I want to encourage every member of the House, every member of the other place and every Canadian to watch a YouTube video called “Tell Me to Stay”. It is a plea from the young woman whose words will end my intervention today.

These are Garifalia’s words:

“Unless you have attempted suicide before, you will not understand how patronizing it is to hear health care practitioners and politicians talking placidly about suicidality as if it were different from MAID. Suicidality is supposedly about wanting to die, the argument goes, whereas a request for MAID is a rational and well-thought-out desire to end one’s suffering, not merely a desire to die for the sake of dying. And yet, if you had told me when I was 16 years old that I could live and not suffer, I would have chosen that option over the death that I sought.

For me, both then and now, any delineation between MAID and suicide as methods of ending suffering is a distinction without a difference. The outcome is the same—one is just medicalized.

People talk about safeguards as if they would prevent someone like me from accidentally or intentionally slipping through the cracks. As a highly intelligent individual with over 10 years of experience in pretending to be okay, let me be clear: The proposed safeguards will not catch me. Had I been able to access MAID in the depths of my struggle, the full life that I have since lived would never have happened...

As someone who endures ongoing and at times debilitating psychological suffering, I firmly believe in and support physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual responses to suffering. What I do not support is the creation of a two-tiered system that would offer suicide prevention to one person and suicide assistance to another.”

She continues to say, “I ask you to prioritize the mandatory review so that the Government of Canada can do its due diligence and consult with Canadian society appropriately first, rather than recklessly expanding the legislative framework based on one judge’s reasoning, thereby undermining the democratic process on which our country is built. I ask you to heed the feedback of disability rights groups, indigenous communities, and international legal scholars, all of whom have spoken out against Bill C-7. Finally, I ask you to prioritize the needs of the vulnerable and the marginalized—the indigenous, the disabled, and the mentally ill.”

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March 11, 2021, will be remembered as the one-year anniversary of the COVID pandemic. If this bill is passed, March 11, 2021, will be the day the Canadian government chose to tell Canada's disabled, mentally ill, marginalized and vulnerable people that they are not needed, not valued and not worthy of care.

• (1750)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, just focusing on the timelines, I really wish I could have posed this question to the previous speaker, the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands, because in response to one of his questions, he said that we need to have this conversation now and deal with this issue now, because it cannot wait.

I moved a motion three times in the last sitting week to extend hours into the evening, not asking anybody to do anything more than just stay in their place to debate this very important topic, and on all three occasions the Conservative Party voted against it. It is as if its members were saying that they do not want to talk about this issue.

I am wondering if the member who just spoke can shed some light for me on why Conservatives did not want to debate such a very important issue.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Madam Speaker, my question is this: Why does that side of the floor not even show up to debate, if this is so important? Where is their proof? This issue has been debated in the past for what it was, and now it is something entirely different.

We passed four different pieces of legislation in this House in just this week alone, so I will not take this from the member when the Minister of Justice, in response to the member for Kelowna—Lake Country, implied that because of our delaying, which was actually our responding to the needs of Canadians as they were coming at us in waves, somehow we deserved to not have this debate go forward any longer. Who is playing games here?

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, several times, I have been touched by the speeches and have been able to understand where my Conservative colleagues are coming from. I am in favour of any speech urging more social measures to help the most vulnerable and marginalized people.

When we consider the position of the Conservatives, who voted against Bill C-14 and Bill C-7, we get the impression that the only solution for dying with dignity is palliative care.

Unfortunately, palliative care and suicide prevention require investments in health and social services. How can the Conservatives get so worked up over the idea that these conditions could be trivialized, when they made cuts to health transfers, reducing the escalator from 6% to 3%? It takes money to offer social services, suicide prevention services and access to care. I cannot follow their logic.

For 50 years, holding up palliative care as the only solution has not resolved the end-of-life issue, as they know full well. Why do the Conservatives not sit down with us in 30 days? They could invite anyone they like, and we could have a cross-party discussion to find solutions.

• (1755)

[English]

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Madam Speaker, the government agreed to a motion to bring in a framework for palliative care across this country and has done nothing. We cannot compare palliative care to assisted suicide when it does not exist to the extent it should in this country.

If he wants to talk about money, I assure him that the government has been printing it faster than it can spend it and in these circumstances has not done anything to help those who are facing a bill that says they have no value.

I repeat what the young woman said in regard to this legislation, which is basically that there is no way any safeguards the government tries to put in place will work, because those who are mentally ill need the opportunity to live, not to be faced with a circumstance in which their government says, “You do not really have any value. Here is an option for you, and by the way, we will will not focus on mental health and palliative care the way we should.”

**Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have heard from thousands of my constituents in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex who feel this bill, with its changes, is getting the elderly, chronically ill, disabled and those suffering from mental illnesses to choose death over choosing to live. I am wondering if the member agrees that Canada's laws on doctor-assisted death are putting undue pressure on the elderly, those in long-term care, or those who have a disability or a mental illness to choose death when it is not even their preference?

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Madam Speaker, I really appreciate that question, because the truth of the matter is that there is not a focus in the Liberal government on valuing life. There is not a focus on valuing children, on valuing families, on valuing our elderly or on valuing our veterans.

There is no question that the amendment we brought forward today is the only way to fix this legislation. Mental illness should not be a means of getting assisted suicide. I am very disturbed, as are the thousands and thousands of Canadians that the government refuses to listen to.

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member indicated that the message being sent is that persons who are mentally ill are not needed, valued or worthy.

What I would reiterate for her is that this issue about persons with disabilities and their competence and autonomy was squarely before the court in Truchon. What the court squarely found in paragraph 681 of the decision is that there is a “pernicious stereotype” about persons with disabilities, and that is “the inability to consent fully to medical assistance in dying.” The decision goes on to say:

Yet the evidence amply establishes that Mr. Truchon is fully capable of exercising fundamental choices concerning his life and his death. As a consequence, he is deprived of the exercise of these choices essential to his dignity as a human being due to his personal characteristics that the challenged provision does not consider.

As such, he must be provided access.

The issue is clearly about providing value and dignity and worth to persons—all persons, including persons with disabilities—and ensuring that they have the competence and autonomy to make decisions, including very serious decisions, after careful consideration, about the timing of their passing.

I wonder if the member for Yorkton—Melville would like to comment on that aspect of the Truchon case.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Madam Speaker, no, I am not interested in responding to the Truchon case, because we are long past that. We are at the place where the government has decided it is more than happy to go along with what the Senate has put forward and to give people with mental illness, on its own, the ability to choose assisted suicide.

That is not in the best interests of Canadians. It is not in the best interests of anyone who, in the case of mental illness, cannot be in a solid state of mind when they are considering assisted suicide.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** It being 6:00 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1800)

[English]

### CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION ACT

The House resumed from December 4, 2020 consideration of the motion that Bill C-232, An Act respecting a Climate Emergency Action Framework, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill this evening. I have been following the debate in the legislature today, and I can honestly say that it was a tremendous debate.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-232, an act respecting a Climate Emergency Action Framework, sponsored by the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre. This private member's bill demonstrates the importance of climate action for all Canadians and highlights the urgency of the situation. I thank its sponsor for putting it forward in the House today and supporting our government's initiatives to address climate change.

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Canadians know that climate change threatens our health, and it certainly threatens our way of life and our planet. That is why we need climate action and we need it now. That is what our government will continue to do.

Last September, the Government of Canada made a commitment in the Speech from the Throne to bring forward a plan to exceed Canada's 2030 target and to legislate Canada's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. We all know that net-zero emissions by 2050 is an ambitious target, but we also know that it is a necessary target, which is the reason we are moving forward.

Scientists tell us that if we are to keep global warming under a 1.5°C temperature increase and avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we must reach net zero by 2050. They have not given us options; they have really given us firm and solid direction.

Establishing this target in legislation has signalled our government's commitment to taking leadership and real action on climate change and to meet Canada's obligations under the Paris Agreement as well. It was with that goal in mind that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change introduced Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act. We are all familiar with that act and what is being proposed in Bill C-12.

We know that the act is a key component of the government's plan to achieve net-zero emissions in the economy by 2050. It would put in place a clear framework for reaching net zero by requiring the minister of the environment to set national targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Those national targets would be set at five-year intervals: for 2030, 2035, 2040 and 2045. The act would also contain an emissions-reduction plan that would encompass important information such as a description of the key emissions-reduction measures the Government of Canada intends to take to achieve the target for a particular milestone year. In addition, it would explain how the target and the key measures and strategies in the plan would contribute to Canada's achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. Therefore, we are excited to be moving forward with Bill C-12.

It would require progress reports. There would be investment reports to check on the progress that is being made and, of course, adjust course as needed along the way. The minister of environment and climate change would prepare at least one progress report relating to each of these milestones in consultation with other federal ministers. The report would also provide updates on the progress toward relevant targets and on the implementation of those federal measures, including any relevant sectoral strategies and federal government operational strategies described in the emissions-reduction plan.

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The government must also provide an assessment report for each target, which is a very important piece of this as well. That report would contain a summary of Canada's official greenhouse gas emissions inventory for the relevant milestone year and a statement on whether the government had achieved its targets. As members can see, also included in that would be additional information about any adjustments that might have to be made.

● (1805)

The reason I am outlining all of this is that Bill C-12 provides for further accountability and transparency by requiring the minister to include information about why Canada did not meet the targets and what actions the Government of Canada is taking or will take to address those missed targets. It would also require that the report be prepared no later than 30 days after the government submits its official greenhouse gas inventory reports in accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and with the relevant milestone year, or to 2050. We recognize, as a government, how important transparency is and how essential it is to hold governments accountable, whether it is our government today or any government in future generations. All emissions reduction plans, progress reports and assessment reports would be made available to the public once they are tabled in Parliament.

To help ensure that Canadians have the best advice when it comes to the environment and climate change, we believe that Bill C-12 would establish those precedents for Canadians. Also, under Bill C-12, we will establish an independent advisory body. Indeed, back in February, just last month, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change announced the creation of this advisory body and nominated 14 Canadians to serve on that committee. They will provide the minister with advice on the most promising pathways to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, drawing on research and analysis and engagement. We expect that this advice will reflect the priorities and ideas that are being shared by all Canadians.

This evening we are dealing with private member's Bill C-232, an act respecting a climate emergency action framework. The bill aims to legislate government's commitments under the United Nations framework on climate change, which I just mentioned, particularly its 2030 GHG emissions reduction target, while also complying with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It would require the Minister of Environment to implement a climate emergency action framework in consultation with indigenous peoples and civil society, and to table in Parliament a report of the framework within one year and a report on its effectiveness within three years.

Very clearly, Bill C-232 echoes the priorities that our government has already established. That said, Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, would actually go even further than what is being proposed in the private member's bill before us, because it would provide a stronger framework for achieving Canada's climate change plan by fixing, in legislation, the government's ultimate goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. It would create a transparent engagement mechanism for setting those targets and developing the emissions reduction plan and assessing the progress made towards achieving these targets.

Bill C-12 would also create an independent advisory party that would provide advice on the most promising pathway to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, and it would give a reporting role to the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainability, two components that the private member's bill we are debating this evening does not include.

Bill C-12 is new and an essential component of the government's overall approach to climate change. Recently, the Government of Canada released "A Healthy Environment and a Healthy Economy" report, which is the federal plan to build a better future with a healthier economy and environment. This plan builds on the work that has been done to date and the efforts that are already under way. It will enable us to exceed our current 2030 emissions reduction target under the Paris Agreement.

While many of the themes presented in Bill C-232 echo the priorities our government has set out, we will not be supporting the bill, because we will be advancing Bill C-12, which, as I said, goes further. It encompasses an advisory committee, it would make the minister fully accountable and would establish broader regulations for transparency and the need for such transparency and disclosure to the public.

● (1810)

What I will say to the member is that I am encouraged to see her coming forward and supporting action on climate change and recognizing—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Repentigny.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, we have had three bills introduced in the same session on achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, which I think sends a powerful message about how we need to do what is necessary to reach that goal.

The time has come to take decisive action to combat climate change. Canada needs climate change legislation that is rooted in the principles of good governance, guided by transparency, accountability, equity and, most importantly, science.

I commend and thank the member for Winnipeg Centre for this bill. I also appreciate the references to indigenous nations and the consideration given to indigenous knowledge. For example, we can learn a lot from New Zealand's experience of considering indigenous knowledge and incorporating the Maori people's good governance of the ocean into its policies. Government stakeholders worked in conjunction with Maori organizations and partners to develop the seven principles for ecosystem-based management for this shared governance.

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I will now get back to Canada and the importance of protecting biodiversity in our fight against climate change. I cannot resist saying a few words about the large number of programs for indigenous peoples that involve promoting and developing projects that pollute and harm the environment instead of focusing on forward-looking and innovative plans for the future.

Relations between the Crown and Canada's first nations are a topical issue. Reconciliation is a profound and vital act. In order to achieve it, we must listen to first nations' environmental concerns and welcome their contributions. Nothing productive will come of always portraying their environmental concerns as those of opponents.

We recognize that indigenous peoples' knowledge of the land is extremely relevant in managing ecosystems and protecting biodiversity. In that regard, we must not just integrate the indigenous fact into a climate law for aesthetic reasons in order to ease our conscience. The intention must be firm and sincere. Experts have done a great deal of work, but unfortunately it has not translated into political action or legal commitments. The government could start by providing access to safe drinking water.

That being said, the Bloc Québécois agrees with the principles and objectives set out in Bill C-232. Just today, March 11, 2021, Quebec began honouring the victims of COVID-19, but let us look at what has happened over the past year.

Unfortunately, over the past year, the government has done a lot to help the fossil fuel industry, rather than to fight climate change.

According to the International Institute for Sustainable Development's 2020 report, subsidies for fossil fuels neared \$5 billion.

The government made promises during the election campaign and once it was in power, but it has not acted on those promises. Whatever happened to the modernization of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act? What about the two billion trees that are supposed to be planted? What have they done to intensify climate action? What is their plan to end government support for the fossil fuel sector?

The Bloc Québécois has always taken a strong stance on environmental protection and the fight against climate change and what must be done to reverse Canada's unfortunate trajectory. Why not show the people that their elected representatives are committed to fighting climate change by being honest about the facts and pragmatic about the solutions available to us? Does Canada not want to preserve what is left of its international reputation for its efforts to fight climate change?

Every economy around the world is struggling, and everything has been disrupted, but many countries are responding with determination and resilience. The Canadian government should pay close attention to countries that are making progress.

It will certainly be crucial for the current and future governments not to drag their feet. In the challenge we are facing, maintaining the status quo would actually be a step backwards. What we really need is to leap ahead.

• (1815)

That is why bills introduced by the opposition parties must be taken into consideration. In that sense, Bill C-232, much like its companion legislation, Bill C-215 introduced by the Bloc Québécois, would benefit just as much from being improved if it is to be considered a legislative framework. Bill C-232 falls somewhere in between, since it is neither an action plan nor a proposed legislative framework. It is a halfway point and needs to be completed. I say that as a point of constructive feedback.

Here are some examples of the clarifications needed.

Clause 4 states that the minister must develop an action framework in consultation with indigenous peoples and civil society. Providing for that kind of consultation is appropriate, but the details of that need to be specified. Public consultation should be supplementary to the consideration of expert opinions. It should include elements that are ultimately incorporated into framework climate legislation.

Dedicating a section to targets is good. The strength of the bill is that it includes the target, specifies it and clearly states that meeting the target is mandatory. It should also clearly outline the policies it proposes, and they must correspond to the area of federal jurisdiction and not that of the provinces. Environmental policy is largely the responsibility of the provincial governments, and successfully fighting climate change depends in large part on the policies of and actions taken by Quebec and the provinces.

Measures for transitioning to a green economy also need to be incorporated. The Bloc Québécois's green and fair recovery plan can be used as a model. I want to be positive and give members something to think about by raising the experience of the United Kingdom, which is garnering a lot of attention, and rightly so. The success of its climate legislation is measurable, and the outcomes have been analyzed. I want to share with my colleagues some important observations.

The success of the United Kingdom's climate change act has been attributed to several factors. However, experts have emphasized the benefits of including the action plan within the text of the legislation. Why? Because doing so lends legitimacy to the act, makes it easier to understand and increases the support of civil society, economic and social stakeholders, and political actors at all levels. That is what ensures long-term stability. The legislation thus becomes permanent and there is less risk of backtracking at the whim of successive governments.

To critics of such an approach who may fear that it would weaken the legislator's prerogatives, I will point out that it is possible to strike a balance between policy directions and the different levels of precision or flexibility of a plan. The United Kingdom has done it, and has even inspired other states to try to do the same.

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A recent poll was done of people, mostly elected officials, who were involved in the legislative process. They acknowledged that the U.K. climate change committee owed its success to its independence. They noted that having directions and recommendations from a pool of experts on every legislative aspect contributed to a political consensus. Why? Because the work was done by independent voices and that makes it credible. The elected members found that what had been communicated allowed them to better understand the issues and come up with better solutions. They added that once impartiality was established and in the absence of political or other interests, collaboration and consensus followed.

The United Kingdom has seen its greenhouse gas emissions drop by 28% since 2010, while securing economic growth of nearly 19%. During the same period, Canada had similar results in economic growth, but saw its emissions increase by 3%.

Several observations can be made to show that Canada's climate governance is not working. A healthy climate governance, one that works and is proven to meet targets, requires projects to be assessed annually. Second, the government needs to be required to table a response to the annual report. Third, the interim objectives have to be set long in advance. Finally, the recommendations have to be evidence-based.

In closing, I want to say that, in a spirit of co-operation and working for the common good, a climate law needs to be ambitious. What is more, the government must not ignore what the opposition parties are saying. Let us get motivated. We will get there.

• (1820)

[English]

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today in support of Bill C-232. It is not lost on me that in the crisis of this global pandemic, perhaps the crisis of climate change has been lost. I have deep gratitude for my caucus colleague for Winnipeg Centre. She has recentred the conversation on catastrophic climate change and the impacts it is going to have, undoubtedly, on society in the years very soon to come.

The thought of guaranteeing Canadians a clean, safe, healthy environment as a human right seems so simple, yet time and again in the House we hear rhetoric from both sides, with consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments debating the merits of climate change. Time is running out. We know that. The youth across this country are telling us clearly that time is running out. Indigenous communities across this country are telling us clearly that time is running out, yet we hear from the Liberals a refusal to hear the calls from our youth.

I stand here today in the House of Commons a mere couple of feet away from what happened on October 28, 2019. A group of youth were arrested for occupying this space under the "Our Time" banner, recognizing that their futures were being gambled with by policies that were not meeting the size, scale and scope of this catastrophe.

We have heard about Bill C-12 here today. The Liberal government refuses to honour its commitments, legal frameworks and international agreements centred on consultation with indigenous

communities. All levels of government are guilty of this. All parties have been guilty of this.

I am here today for those youth who were here, putting everything on the line for their futures. I am here today for the indigenous youth who led the protest at the B.C. legislature in support of the land defenders there. If we do not have a clear consultative framework that centres on our obligations to indigenous people across this country, then we know we are not meeting our obligations and our moral imperatives on the agreements that we profess to sign on to in the House. The idea of a right, for those living in Canada, to a safe, clean and healthy environment seems so simple, yet there has been only talk and no action. It is a dream deferred to a future date. We do not have the time.

The science at the interparliamentary committee on climate change has been clear. We have an opportunity right now, in this moment, to change course. If we do not do that, the cost will be far too great. If we do not intervene right now in these critical years, the impacts of catastrophic climate change will become irreversible. We have an obligation to future generations of the world. We have mortgaged their futures on a short-term extractory capitalist system that seeks to squeeze the lifeblood out of our natural resources and our earth.

I am deeply grateful to my hon. colleague for Winnipeg Centre for providing the House with the leadership and the framework to ensure that we have critical consultations in place, and that we meet our United Nations obligations on climate change. The government continues to commit to targets it has no real intention of keeping. It misses them again and again, and we are running out of time.

• (1825)

I am here today for the Water Walkers, and I think about the people who are leading the struggle locally in my city: Indigenous women who honour *nibi*, the water, and know that they, under the leadership of Grandma Josephine, walk the shorelines. I learned from their teaching that we should be granting our water, nature and air the same rights as we grant the corporations that have been polluting with impunity for far too long.

The idea that we can solve this by 2050 is too late. I have to share with the House the impacts, atrocities and environmental degradation of this planet. I feel that, when future generations look back at us in the House, they will know that we had a chance to do something different. They will read this bill and know that the opportunity was before us, yet it was not supported. It was not taken seriously, and the commitments were pushed down another 20 years.



By that time it will be too late, but the truth is becoming abundantly clear. The corporations that continue to degrade and pollute our world are going to be held to account. I will share with the House another thought. Maybe in the future, when they look at the size and scale of the impending wildfires and floods, and the ongoing diseases unleashed in pandemics, they might meet internationally and convene for real truth and reconciliation globally on climate change, like the Nuremberg trials.

These companies know the impacts and they know the science, yet they spend all of their time and their money to silence activists' voices and silence the science. It is clear that if we do not rise to this moment right now, we are in a significant, dire catastrophe. Climate change is threatening absolutely everything that we value.

We know that extreme weather is worsening, and that the resilience of our communities is constantly under threat. The future of our children and grandchildren depends on our actions here today. Globally we are being left behind, because other countries have a clear plan. They are sticking to their commitments. They know that we have to meet this plan by 2030. Bill C-12 does not do that.

I have sat in the House and listened to Liberals and Conservatives boast, brag and debate about how many pipelines they can build and buy, and how much they can continue to extract. I have been in the House when we have debated the failures of these successive governments to have meaningful, free, prior and informed consent in the legal fiction that is Canada. In unceded territories we have a legal obligation to deal with the rights holders of these lands, and indigenous rights in this country are inherently tied to land rights.

We have a strong, brilliant indigenous woman who has come to us with a private member's bill that lays out, as they have already identified, commitments they have already made. They talk about consultation, when the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre stresses that there can be no reconciliation absent of justice. To vote down this bill today would be a clear signal that the government is not committed to its obligations, because these are frameworks that are already clearly laid out.

Anything short of supporting this, and any conversation about kicking this obligation another 20 years down the line, will be remembered by the young people who were arrested here, the young people who were arrested on the steps of the legislature in B.C., and the young people who take to the streets for Fridays for Future. They are watching. The question is, when this is done, when this vote is over and when our time here in the House is finished, what are members of the House going to tell them? What are they going to have to say?

• (1830)

We will be supporting this bill. I will be able to look my son in his eyes and let him know that we did everything we could to stop this.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hamilton Centre for his powerful words. I also want to begin by thanking our colleague from Winnipeg Centre for bringing forward this bill, which makes such

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an important contribution to a conversation about an issue that many of us feel is the most critical issue facing not just our country, but our planet.

I want to acknowledge that I am speaking today from the unceded lands of the Wet'suwet'en people here in my home community of Smithers, British Columbia. It is such an honour to speak to this bill at this juncture in time when we are searching for answers so desperately. After decades and decades of knowing about the severity of the climate crisis and after so many false starts, the sad fact is that, as a country, we are failing. All of our actions over all of that time have had so little impact.

I started becoming concerned about the climate crisis as a teenager. Now I am old enough to have teenagers of my own, yet so little has been done. Time and time again, we have made commitments, and set targets, timelines, and dates. Time and time again, we have failed to act in a concerted and consistent enough manner to realize the goals we have made for ourselves.

What Canada has shown is a commitment to building and expanding the fossil fuel infrastructure of this country. This has erased so much of the progress we have made through things like energy efficiency and clean energy production. With so little time left on the clock, we are still searching for ways to mobilize our government and fight the climate crisis, this climate emergency, with the seriousness and dedication it demands from us.

Canadians, especially young Canadians, and my colleague spoke so eloquently to this, want some mechanisms to break this pattern of complacency and apathy. They want to hold today's decision-makers to account for their promises, not at some distant date well outside the time horizons of our political process, elections and political calculus, or the investment horizons of the private sector. After decades of failure, we know that does not work. What Canadians want is regular, binding, short-term and enforceable accountability measures that hold today's leaders to account.

This bill before us, Bill C-232, has a number of strengths. To me, its greatest strength and most important contribution is that it centres our work on the climate crisis and it centres in that work the rights of indigenous people. This is such an important thing to bear in mind and keep at the centre as we go forward together.

It was good to see in the government's own accountability legislation, for all of its flaws, a passing reference to the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. By comparison though, Bill C-232 calls not only for the full involvement of indigenous people in the creation of a climate emergency action framework, but it also calls for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to ensure that the framework upholds all of the provisions of the U.N. declaration and that it specifically takes into account indigenous knowledge and science.

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Reading this bill and reading, in particular, the clauses around the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People made me think of all the indigenous nations in northwest B.C., this incredible part of our country that I am so deeply honoured to represent in this House. Indigenous people in northwest B.C. are on the frontline of climate impacts and the changing climate is affecting so many aspects of their daily lives.

Thinking about our environment and thinking about the resources and goods produced by this bountiful place, there are few species that are more iconic than wild salmon. All five species of wild salmon swim up our rivers from the ocean every single year. In the fall, if someone goes on social media, they will see so many photos of smiling people processing salmon, drying salmon, smoking salmon, sharing recipes, and sharing techniques and traditions that have been handed down generation after generation.

It is at the very centre of the way of life in northwest B.C. However, with warming ocean waters and ocean acidification, the introduction of invasive species and droughts affecting spawning channels, things are looking very precarious for this iconic species.

● (1835)

I spoke today to Walter Joseph, the fisheries manager at the office of the Wet'suwet'en, and he spoke about the challenges in the tributaries where the salmon spawn, but what really has Walter worried, is what is happening in the ocean. He described the ocean as a black box. When the salmon go out to the ocean we do not know what happens. What we do know is that, for so many wild salmon stocks, the numbers are declining every single year, and we know that climate is having a huge impact on that.

On Haida Gwaii, we have seen tremendous die-offs in the yellow cedar, a tree species that is so critical to the Haida people. We know from work done by the University of British Columbia that this is a direct result of low winter precipitation and warmer temperatures. A team from the University of Victoria also found that sea level rise on Haida Gwaii is greater than anywhere else along our coast.

In the eastern part of our region we have seen the mountain pine beetle ravage our forests. We have seen years with extreme wildfires and 2018 was one of the worst years on record for wildfires. It left thousands upon thousands of hectares scorched. It left communities evacuated. It burned buildings from Fort St. James and Burns Lake all the way to Telegraph Creek in the northern part of this beautiful region.

Speaking of Telegraph Creek, I wanted to call to mind a young fellow who is really remarkable. His name is Montay Beaubien-Day. He is a 13-year-old member of the Tahltan and the Wet'suwet'en nations. When Monty saw his family's ranch in Telegraph Creek burn in the massive wildfires of 2018, it inspired him to join with other young people, such as Haana Edenshaw from the Haida nation and 13 others from across the country in a lawsuit against the Government of Canada for failing to attack the climate emergency.

At the heart of that suit brought forward by these young people is a deep-seated frustration with Canada's inaction on the climate emergency. The plaintiffs went to court because they wanted this country to be accountable for its promises and to take responsibility

for the future it is handing their generation. How did we get to the point where our children, the young generation, has to take the country to court to ensure that they inherit a basic semblance of a livable future?

Indigenous communities are not just on the front lines of climate change when it comes to impacts, but when it comes to solutions as well. I have been so inspired by the work done by the Heiltsuk's climate action team on the central coast led by climate action coordinator. They are engaging residents and creating a community energy plan grounded in the Heiltsuk community's needs. Their plan is to reduce dependency on fossil fuels, bring the community back in line with Heiltsuk values and laws, improve the health and safety and create a green economy for the Heiltsuk people. Their aim is to have 129 heat pumps installed by the end of March. They are for almost one-third of the homes in their community and they will reduce emissions by as much as five tonnes per household.

I think of the Nuxalk Nation, which is also on the central coast. Their clean energy initiative is focused on building a run of the river hydro project which will be able to reduce the Bella Coola Valley's diesel consumption by up to 80%. On Haida Gwaii, the Swilawiid Sustainability Society is engaging island residents, especially youth, in a conversation about a clean energy future.

I spoke with chief councillor of Skidegate, Billy Yovanovich, a couple of summers ago. His community has installed 350 heat pumps. The Haida are leading in so many other ways. Many of these communities are working hard to take action on climate change and these are not big communities. They are not metropolitan centres.

These are small villages, many of them with only a few hundred residents, yet they understand inherently that they have a responsibility to be a part of the solution. They are taking responsibility for their part of the challenge, and Canada needs to have their backs. The impacts we are seeing will not slow without our country also taking responsibility and doing its share. The sad truth—

● (1840)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is truly an honour and a pleasure to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-232, an act respecting a climate emergency action framework. This bill, which has been tabled by my good friend and colleague from Winnipeg Centre, is such an important bill, and I want to thank her at the outset for her important work in standing up not just for indigenous peoples but for all Canadians and their right to have a clean, safe and healthy environment.

This bill would provide a critical framework, which is lacking right now, for a transformative climate action policy. It is framed around a green new deal that would make sure that all climate action initiatives would comply with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as ensure the right of all those living in Canada to have a safe, clean and healthy environment and that we will uphold our responsibilities to future generations. This bill provides for the development of a framework that we desperately need when it comes to climate action.

We know that the Government of Canada has failed to meet every single climate target it has put out. In fact, as the government tabled recent legislation, it also failed to give people the confidence it is going to deliver a plan in a timely fashion. This is based on the fact that we are not even going to see a progress report on how we are doing until 2028 and that there is no milestone target for 2025.

We heard from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2018 that we had only 12 years to reduce emissions to pre-2010 levels, meaning a reduction of over 40% by 2030, yet the Government of Canada still has no plan and has not included indigenous people.

This bill is absolutely critical as an accountability tool for those who are most impacted by climate change. It explicitly outlines the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to Canada's climate response and it would require the government to consult meaningfully with indigenous peoples and communities and civil society.

Canadians are exhausted. They are tired of governments committing to targets like the ones I cited earlier and then missing them again and again. We are running out of time.

I want to talk a bit about what is happening in my riding and the impact climate change is having on indigenous peoples in the communities I represent.

In three of the last five years, we have had record floods that have impacted wild salmon, of course, and impacted the communities of the Tseshaht people and the K'omoks First Nation, with both the Somass and the Puntledge rivers breaching.

We had a drought in 2014, and then it rained just in time in August. We were afraid we were going to lose all our wild salmon, which is a critical food source for indigenous people, and it is not just food security; their culture is centred around it, and of course their economy. Wild salmon is critical to their survival and who they are. Where I live, the Nuu-chah-nulth are salmon people, so this is very important to indigenous peoples, who are going to be most impacted by climate change.

We saw the acidification in Baynes Sound, which impacted the Qualicum people and their food security with the shellfish they rely on. My good friend Chief Moses Martin, from the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, often talks about the importance of investing in restoration, in science and indigenous knowledge, of listening to indigenous knowledge, but he cites that the most urgent pressure right now on wild salmon is the warming of oceans due to climate change.

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We know our oceans are a carbon sink and that 90% of carbon right now is being stored in our oceans, which are warming right now and making things more difficult. In fact, Humboldt squid, which is normally from California, landed on our shores in Tofino just a few years ago. It is mind-blowing to see the kinds of shifts that are occurring because of climate change. Of course, there are also the wildfires we have seen throughout British Columbia.

● (1845)

Youth are coming forward urging us for changes. We have all been on marches with youth against the impacts of climate change and them demanding action. We cannot wait. We heard from my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley about the impact this is having on the children in his riding, and on my children.

I was really inspired by Ben Mason and Lister de Vitre, who live in my riding in Cumberland, British Columbia. They have been going around the community, to the Cumberland council, to the local legion and to local groups talking about new ways for economic growth, social responsibility and environmental safety. They are asking for a green new deal centred around indigenous values and knowledge. They want to see emissions cut by half by 2030, but right now we do not have the framework in place to do that.

As Ben Mason said, doing nothing is not an option. The way the government is moving forward without a plan and without the framework in place being proposed by my good friend and colleague from Winnipeg Centre, we are abandoning that generation. This is absolutely unacceptable, because doing nothing cannot be an option for them. We are their voice. We are responsible for their future.

I know there has been a lot of discussion about the cost of investing in climate change. I think about my good friend, the late chief of Hesquiaht, Richard Lucas, who fought so hard to get his nation off of diesel energy and get a hydro project into his community so it could do its part when it came to climate change. However, it also makes economic sense in the long term. We need to continue to listen to indigenous people in our communities who have the knowledge and the wherewithal to get us there.

*Private Members' Business*

Members have heard me speak repeatedly in the House about the cost and impacts of climate change. When I started as a member of Parliament, climate impacts were costing the Canadian government about \$900 million a year. Now it is over \$5 billion in not even six years. The PBO projects we will be running climate emergency costs between \$21 billion and \$43 billion by 2050. Therefore, spending money right now, supporting indigenous communities and bringing everyone together under a framework to tackle climate change makes economic sense as well.

I share this with the House as the critic for economic development for the federal NDP because it makes economic sense to do that. We cannot leave people behind. We know indigenous people are constantly being left behind. This is the opportunity for us to not only walk together, but to centre our framework and our plan around indigenous people.

I think about my friend Carol Anne Hilton, who is the founder of the Indigenomics Institute. We need to listen to the wisdom of indigenous women, who have ideas on how we can move forward when it comes to climate change and working with indigenous peoples. We need a plan that honours our international commitments and obligations to address this climate emergency. We owe this to our youth. We need a just transition to a green economy that brings workers along, moves away from fossil fuel subsidies and invests instead in a green economy.

Our party has been fighting for this for a long time. I think about the late Jack Layton and his climate accountability bill that he tabled back in 2006. We are ready to work with the government and the Senate to pass this bill now, to take the action that is absolutely necessary.

Canada is being left behind as many countries are moving forward, even right-leaning governments such as in Britain, Germany and Japan. They understand the economic opportunity as well. We need to do this, ensuring we do it with indigenous peoples and respecting them under the framework among others. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples must be at the centre of our plan. Right now we have no plan. We need this plan to be in place. We need the government to follow its words with respect to supporting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This is the government's opportunity to engage in meaningful consultation with indigenous peoples and accommodate the concerns raised across Canada, including its failure to obtain free prior and informed consent. This has to be addressed.

Once again, I thank my colleague.

• (1850)

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleagues, particularly from the New Democratic Party, whose wisdom and power today pierce my heart and gives me hope.

It is my pleasure to speak on my private member's, Bill C-232, the climate emergency action act.

We have international commitments to fight the climate emergency and to uphold human rights. This includes the UN Conven-

tion on Climate Change, the Paris agreement and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Bill C-232 would uphold these international agreements and would recognize the right of all Canadians to a safe, clean, healthy environment as a human right.

More than 100 countries in the world have recognized the human right to a safe, clean, healthy environment in their legislation and/or constitution. Instead of building more pipelines and investing in companies around the world that violate indigenous rights and hurt Mother Earth, it is time for Canada to follow their lead.

I know many people in the House will shamefully vote against this legislation at a time when we are in the middle of a climate crisis, and we see violent attacks on our Mother Earth. Everything we value is at risk.

Exploitive resource extraction companies continue to contribute to the ongoing genocide and an epidemic of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, as noted in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The exploitation of our Mother Earth continues to violate the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples and all peoples across these lands we now call Canada.

Indigenous communities and nations continue to be denied the right to traditional land-based practices, the use and management of their own territories, while other human rights to housing, clean drinking water and health go unmet.

Even the Canadian Paediatric Society is raising the issue of climate anxiety being experienced by young people, who are the front lines, fighting to save our earth.

The government introduced Bill C-12, but it is not nearly good enough. In fact, it is a slap in the face to science and will not allow us to meet climate targets.

Bill C-232 proposes a framework for developing a made-in-Canada plan to address the ever-more pressing climate emergency, while it offers a clear strategy for kick-starting our country's green economic transition and rapidly reducing our emissions, while also leveraging this moment as an opportunity to right the wrongs of our colonial past and address violence faced by BIPOC communities in our country.

Despite the opportunity that we have before us, I sense that most members here today will vote no to Bill C-232. Before they do that, I hope they will consider what is at stake: every single thing we know and value; our Mother Earth; our health and wellness, and even the existence of future generations; our air quality; our oceans and coasts; water and food security; more fires, hurricanes and droughts; the further displacement of indigenous peoples, BIPOC and coastal communities; and even an increase in future pandemics. To turn down this opportunity in the middle of a climate crisis and at a time when we need to plan for post-pandemic economic rebuilding is shameful.

I ask the members of the House to think about how history will remember us in relation to this legislation. The science is clear about the actions we must take right now to avoid the worst impacts of a runaway climate crisis. This must be done while respecting the human rights of indigenous peoples and all peoples of the world.

• (1855)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The question is on the motion.

[Translation]

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

[English]

**Mr. Matthew Green:** Madam Speaker, I respectfully request a recorded division on my colleague's bill, Bill C-232.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Pursuant to an order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 24, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), and of the amendment.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Today will be a historic day for Canada, a day that will be looked back on for decades to come as a day of infamy for the rights of vulnerable, disabled and mentally ill Canadians. Years from now, our country will be rocked by a political scandal when it is revealed how tens of thousands of vulnerable Canadians ended their lives through medical assistance in dying. We will discover how many of these vulnerable Canadians, whose deaths were not reasonably foreseeable and who suffered from depression and other mental health challenges, were allowed to end their lives with little to no safeguards.

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Righteously angered families will demand justice from the government. They will demand parliamentary inquiries and they will fight through the courts to reveal the truth that, for decades, the government failed to support vulnerable Canadians and, instead, allowed them to end their lives in the absence of real assistance. On that day, a prime minister will stand across the way in the House to give a tearful apology for the lives of so many lost as a result of the Liberal government's negligence. Parliamentarians will vote for serious reform to affirm the lives of vulnerable people and reinstate firm restrictions to protect the rights of the disabled and mentally ill. Together on that day, we will vow never again to stand idly by and let legislation pass in the House that would put vulnerable lives at risk.

The vote tonight will determine whether that is the bleak future this country will have, and today we have a choice, as parliamentarians: Do we stand up for the rights of disabled Canadians, those suffering with mental health challenges, or do we vote for radical legislation that will imperil the lives of many of them? Tonight I will vote with a clean conscience knowing that I have done my duty to uphold the rights and dignity of Canadians, and I urge MPs in the House to look deep into their consciences and ask themselves if they want history to remember them as those who went along and voted for this travesty.

Some members of the House may scoff at my claims, but if they will not take it from me, they should take it from the very people whose lives are being held in the balance because of this vote. They should take it from those in the disability community who have been speaking vocally about the pressure they face from society to end their own lives. They should take it from suicide survivors who know that under this legislation, their lives would have ended before they could recover and live fulfilled lives. The Liberal government likes to praise itself for its deference to the experts, but in this case, it is kowtowing to special interests who are pushing a radical agenda.

If the Liberals really wanted to craft a bill that reflected what the experts are saying, they would heed the words of Dr. Sonu Gaiind, the former head of the Canadian Psychiatric Association. I will note that Dr. Gaiind is live-tweeting tonight's proceedings. He has raised the alarm that doctors under this legislation, many of whom are not equipped to make judgments on whether a patient with mental health issues will be able to recover, will also be given the power to grant death to these patients. He has raised serious concerns about the motivations of this legislation that seek to grant more autonomy for privileged people to end their lives, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, seriously risk further marginalizing the lives of those who do not have the privilege of being able, of having a sound mind or of having access to the best mental and physical life supports.

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He has raised the alarm that nowhere has anyone considered the risk of this legislation for those who are suffering with suicidal ideations. Where are the protections for those contemplating suicide? We recently commemorated International Women's Day and I became aware recently that women are twice as likely to receive medical assistance in dying and twice as likely to attempt suicide. What analysis has been done to ensure that women, particularly disabled women and those suffering with mental health challenges, will not be marginalized by this legislation? I think this can be said of a lot of racialized communities and others as well.

• (1900)

Disability groups have pointed out that, in a cruel irony, today is the 11th anniversary of Canada's decision to adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Did the government plan this slap in the face to the lives of disabled people who struggle every day to live their lives and who will now soon live with the added struggle of the constant pressure to seek assistance to end their lives?

This year, of all years, there is no excuse for ignorance when it comes to the plight of those suffering mental health challenges, the disabled, and those who are contemplating suicide. We have seen the significant impact that suicide is having on our society. In some cases, death by suicide has outstripped deaths from COVID-19. In a year when we have learned so much about the gaps in assistance and its fatal consequences, how can we move forward with this out-of-touch and radical legislation that seeks to make it even easier for vulnerable people to receive death? The situation that we have been placed in, as parliamentarians, in response to these proposed amendments from the Senate, is precarious.

Canadians are still adapting to the groundbreaking decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Carter case. They are still grappling with the subsequent legislation passed in the last Parliament, which legalized medical assistance in dying. Now with the Truchon decision, we have been called to enact new changes less than five years into the coming into force of the previous medical assistance in dying legislation. If that were not enough, now we are being asked by the Liberal government to go even further than the Truchon decision, which did not even consider mental illness as an exclusive justification for seeking and being granted medically assisted death, and we are being called on now to pass this legislation in a rushed manner.

I suspect, and I know in my riding, that if we ask the average Canadian if they want medical assistance in dying for minors or for those solely with a mental illness, we would receive a resounding no; yet, the overwhelmingly Liberal dominated Senate has taken it upon itself to push the agenda of special interests forward, to the detriment of vulnerable peoples. It was not that long ago that the Supreme Court ruled that there was no right to a medically assisted death. The Carter decision, I believe, was in many ways a deviation from the previous law, but today, to many, it may seem quite conservative because, at least in that case, the courts had a desire to place clear parameters around this novel practice.

It is clear to me that the Minister of Justice wants to implement a radical agenda that would almost see euthanasia legalized for every occasion. I think he said as much in his vote when he voted against

the previous legislation. The Liberals did not feel that Carter went far enough. They did not feel that Truchon went far enough. They could not get a pass through the House, so they got a pass through the Senate. The justice committee did not contemplate mental health, and inasmuch as the committee did contemplate mental health the testimony it heard advised against including mental health.

There are so many Canadians who are going to be devastatingly hurt by the recklessness of this legislation, and Canadians have not had an opportunity to fully pass judgment on this legislation. When we have an election in the next few months or years, we need the government to stake out a clear position on where it wants to go with euthanasia, before Canadians go to the polls. I do not recall any party, in the last election, putting forward a policy that said it wanted to seek mental illness inclusions in the medical assistance in dying regime. The government does not have a mandate from Canadians to pass this radical legislation.

It is time to be on the right side of history and stand with vulnerable Canadians against this dangerous and radical legislation.

• (1905)

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, by way of clarification, first, the constant pressure that the member referred to simply does not exist. There is no evidence anywhere in this country of any discipline or criminal prosecutions against any medical practitioner in the entire history of MAID's being available the last five years.

Second, the notion of the impact on the vulnerable would be addressed by one of the Senate amendments that we are proposing to adopt, which is to collect race-based data and data on persons with disabilities.

Third, respecting the issue of the courts' never having dealt with the issue of mental illness, while it not addressed squarely in Truchon, it was addressed in a case that comes out of that member's province, the E.F. case, through the Alberta Court of Appeals, which found that mental illness should be a condition for which MAID is made available.

Would the member opposite agree that the community of persons with disability is not a monolith? Chantal Petitclerc, the senator who sponsored the bill, is a person with a disability. Steven Fletcher, a former Conservative cabinet minister, is a person with disability. Both have spoken eloquently, as have the litigants in the Truchon case, about the need to ensure that their autonomy and their competence is respected.

Would the member agree with that statement?

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Madam Speaker, I think it is incredibly sad that the hon. parliamentary secretary would discount the testimony, the views and deeply held beliefs of so many disabled Canadians. I would just say that it is easy to claim that there is no evidence when the government has never set up any regime to collect evidence that would suggest there are abuses happening. The government is not looking for abuses, and so it claims that these do not exist. It is time for the government to start putting in a regime that would hold every member in this profession accountable so that we could get the facts and the data.

• (1910)

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, does my colleague not find it inconsistent that when considering the Senate amendments, the government ruled that the advance consent one was beyond the scope of the bill, even though it had put some advance consent measures in the bill? Moreover, it then decided that mental illness was acceptable to include as not out of the scope of the bill when that had not even been mentioned originally.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Madam Speaker, my thanks to the member for her thoughtful question and her advocacy on this issue. I guess that is something we should be thankful to the government for, that it actually found some aspect of the Senate's amendments objectionable.

Frankly, I think that a political game is being played here. The Liberals have claimed that Conservatives have been obstructing debate and that they had to force this closure. The fact is that Canadians have been caught unaware by the government's radical changes of adding mental illness to this. As Conservatives, we are only standing up for the right of Canadians to have time to actually digest this legislation and the radical new changes that the government is including. Canadians have only been given a couple of weeks to digest what is literally life-and-death legislation.

The Liberals like to say that the Conservatives are holding this up, but the fact is that they were trying to sneak this in in the dead of the night, and we are not going to let them do it. If I can judge by the hundreds and thousands of emails I am receiving from Canadians, who are furious about this, we are only hitting the tip of the iceberg here and Canadians need more time to review this legislation.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the reality of the situation here is that we did ask for more time. We asked the Conservative Party last week. I stood in this place right here and asked on three occasions to sit until midnight to have a healthy debate on this very, very important issue, and the Conservatives routinely voted against that.

The Conservatives did not want to continue to debate this issue, so when they claim that we not interested in debating this and are playing tricks and games and all of that stuff, the reality is that it is the Conservatives who are. The leader of the opposition said in a National Post article just two weeks ago that the Conservatives were ready to work day and night to get the job done, to get legislation through.

Here we have a piece of legislation that we are mandated to complete by a certain date by a superior court and are up against dead-

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lines, and we are asking the Conservatives to stay late and to work overtime to get it done, and they have refused to do it.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Madam Speaker, the Conservatives will always work hard to ensure that we pass legislation to help Canadians who are going through a year of pandemic and bankruptcies and who have the highest unemployment rate in the G7, but what we will not do is allow the Liberals to sneak a bill through the dead of the night on a—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am glad to be able to rise this evening to speak to these amendments from the Senate on the medical assistance in dying bill.

It is unfortunate that we have such a short amount of time to talk about these amendments, because this is quite literally a matter of life and death. I would think the government, on something as serious as this, would want to spend some time thinking about these changes, which are far outside the scope of the original bill.

Let me talk about the purpose of the Senate. The Senate was put in place at its inception as a mechanism to look at the legislation from the government of the day and decide whether it was good for Canada. If not, it was to provide fixes for it and send it back. Clearly, what has happened with Bill C-7 is far beyond that.

The unelected members of the Senate have come with items like MAID for people suffering only from mental illness, advance directives, and all kinds of things that were beyond the scope of what was presented. That is not its role, and the government, by accepting these things outside of its scope, is really putting ideas in the minds of the senators to encourage them to continue to do what is not their role.

Let us go through the amendments one at a time. The first one allows those with only mental illness to have access to MAID and says we will talk about it in a while: not in 18 months, but in 24 months. This is really unacceptable. After the first medical assistance in dying legislation was brought in, the Liberal government put together consultants and a panel from the Council of Canadian Academies. This was done by the honourable Jane Philpott and the hon. member for Vancouver Granville, to study whether people with mental illness only should have access to MAID.

That working group could not agree that this was a good thing to proceed with. It was quite concerned about whether people with mental illness really had the capability to give informed consent. It was concerned as well that we were going down the wrong path. Even the Netherlands, which has such a broad euthanasia range, only allows people with dementia to have medical assistance in dying, and there is still a ton of controversy with that. Even the Netherlands has not gone down this very dark path.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health issued a report to the government and said:

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Canadians themselves are divided on the issue of MAiD, and most do not support making it available to those with only mental illness.

If the government is not going to listen to Canadians when they say this is not what they want, that is a concern.

These experts from CAMH also said:

The federal government should not make an amendment to MAiD legislation for people with mental illness as their sole underlying medical condition at this time due to a lack of evidence that mental illness is an irremediable medical condition in individual cases.

CAMH also expressed:

The concern is that many individuals with mental illness...[may have] impairments in [their] reasoning capacity that [would] make it difficult for them to connect their symptoms with their illness, fully understand the risks and benefits of treatment, and/or make...decisions based on personal goals and values.

With that, the Liberal government should be listening to Canadians who do not think this is a good idea, the mental health experts who do not think this is a good idea and the many people who are suffering from mental illness.

Not to be coarse, but the reality today is that people who only have mental illness as their condition can already commit suicide. In fact, sadly, thousands of Canadians are doing it, and thousands more are likely to do it as a result of the failure of the government to address the pandemic and restore the economy. People are losing their businesses and their livelihoods, and they have been under lockdown. This is a very serious condition.

A time when the government is talking about suicide prevention is no time to be saying, "Let us put extra help in here so people can have medical professionals assist them in their suicide efforts." That is offensive at the very least.

• (1915)

The second amendment has to do with the review of the MAiD regime. Absolutely, I see the government wants to have a review, but the fact is, there was a review in the first legislation, and the government did not do it. That was unacceptable and should have been addressed then. I do not think we need a new formula on how to do a review. I think we just need to do the review.

The third amendment is about collecting race-based data regarding MAiD. I see in the discussion of this and it has been mentioned that we collect this kind of data on other things, such as palliative care. Well, palliative care, as members know because my private member's bill on palliative care was unanimously supported in the House, is a topic that is near and dear to my heart. In fact, the framework on palliative care to get consistent access for Canadians was begun because the data shows that where there is good quality palliative care, 95% of the people choose to live as well as they can for as long as they can.

However, sadly, this government has prioritized the killing of people through medical assistance in dying and de-emphasized palliative care. When we talk about people who, maybe due to their race and social standing, do not have good access to palliative care, we are talking about 60% of Canadians left without any access. That certainly should have been the priority for the government, instead of expanding the regime to help people end their lives.

I see that the clarification of neurocognitive disorder not being considered a mental illness was rejected as an amendment. The justice minister clarified in his testimony that the exclusion is not intended to capture neurocognitive disorders that are due to Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease. Well, the justice minister has a habit of needing to clarify things, because what is in the bills is never clear enough. We saw that in Bill C-6 where a clarification had to be put on the website about the definition. It was not in the bill, but it needed to be done because of the hurry with which these things are brought forward. I think that we need to take the time to get things right and not rush.

With respect to the advance request amendment, I would say that the same group that was put together to consult on this issue consulted on advance consent. The government already had this information, and it was not recommended that we go with advance consent. There were concerns about a few things.

First of all, who decides what is intolerable suffering when the person has lost capacity? When do we take action? How do we prove that it is informed consent? How do we make sure there is a third party responsible to enforce the decision if there is a disagreement after the person has lost capacity? These were the issues that had been brought forward, and they were ignored altogether in this discussion. I would add that Belgium and Luxembourg only allow advance consent when a person is permanently unconscious, and so that should be a consideration.

I would be remiss on the palliative care discussion if I did not do a plug for the Granfondo Cycle of Life fundraiser in my riding on April 9 at 7:30 p.m. Members can get details from my web page.

The other topic of discussion is about the work that needs to be done to actually make sure there are alternatives. We talked about the need for mental health supports and the need for palliative care. These are important considerations.

In short, I feel that the Senate overstepped its bounds with the amendments that it brought. I feel that the government should have appealed to the Supreme Court with the Quebec decision in the first place. Certainly, the government should not be expanding the scope of medical assistance in dying without doing its due diligence on the review that was originally desired, and spend more time listening to what Canadians want and what the people who are going to be impacted are feeling.

With that, it is clear that I will be voting against these amendments, as well as the medical assistance in dying legislation that has been brought forward.

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton for her speech.



My question has to do with the mental illness aspect, which she talked about.

She said that there are risks. However, in 24 months, we can expect the process and requests to be carefully regulated based on medical opinions, as is currently the case for other requests.

She also spoke about the fact that people who are suffering may commit suicide.

In that context, would it not be better to give people the option of dying with dignity, if necessary? We want them to be able to consult with a doctor to find the best solution for them, which could even prevent their suicide or use of medical assistance in dying.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

In my view, there have to be alternatives to MAID. In the case of mental health, more help must be made available. This help is lacking in Canada, and people cannot afford these services. This is a priority. I think the government must make it a priority to actually help Canadians, not to help them die.

• (1925)

[English]

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Sarnia—Lambton for her commentary, but I find it is much in the same vein as many of her party colleagues in terms of the level of hyperbole and the terminology that has been used. She has used terms about things being offensive. Many of the members who have spoken this evening are missing some of the fundamental points about this legislation.

Regardless of the discussion on mental illness, entry into the entire discussion of MAID requires informed and voluntary consent and that people be enduring an intolerable level of suffering. That is exactly what we are trying to address.

The second point about the inconsistency in approach is not borne out by the facts, because \$11 billion was committed by our government in 2017 to address palliative care and mental health supports. She urged us to “spend more time”. Twenty-four months is the time that will be spent to ensure that when this clause sunsets, there will be a review by an expert panel and at least 12 months of deliberation by Parliament. Is that the type of time that the member opposite is seeking?

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, I think I did quote quite a few facts and that most Canadians do not want to have medical assistance in dying for the mentally ill. I think I presented the fact that the government itself has consulted and received answers that say that this is not a good path to go down, including with regard to advance consent. This was not recommended after they had consulted.

In terms of the time that needs to be spent, there is no point in spending time consulting if we do not listen to the results of the facts that come out of that consultation. I would encourage the government to review the consultations that have already been done, and in terms of Senate amendments, we have had only a very brief

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amount of time to talk about these despite the fact they are the most radical of the suggested changes.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I do not blame the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton for not knowing the historical reality that the Senate of Canada has done much more egregious things against the democratic will of the House of Commons. In November 2010, which I remember vividly, the Senate killed a climate accountability act that had been brought forward by Bruce Hyer, Bill C-311. Bruce went on to become a Green Party colleague of mine in the House, but what the Senate did was even worse than anything we can imagine, in that it killed the climate legislation without first referring it to committee as a result of procedural shenanigans ordered by the PMO.

To come back to the main point here of the legislation before us, Bill C-7, I agree with the hon. member that we have not had adequate time to review the changes the Senate has proposed in relation to mental health provisions. I am deeply troubled by how quickly we are now moving ahead with something that just weeks ago I stood in the House to support, namely, the original bill. That bill specifically said that we were not dealing with mental health issues, and yet now here we are. To that extent, I agree with my colleague. I am very troubled by how quickly we have to move—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** A very short answer from the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands always has a valid point, so yes, the amount of time we have had is not adequate. I would agree that although the Senate does good work, at times senators are overstepping their bounds. Senators are not the elected House and we need to make sure that they understand that as well.

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to note that I will be splitting my time this evening with the member for Oshawa.

It is interesting that we are speaking to Bill C-7 today under these circumstances. As legislators, we have a very weighty responsibility to do our due diligence in considering legislation. We have a duty to Canadians and the constituents who elected us to thoroughly analyze and review the legislation that is passed in the House. When we are considering issues of life and death, that responsibility is only heightened, and it is absolutely reprehensible that the Liberal government is limiting debate on this legislation and hastily accepting amendments from the other chamber without due diligence.

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When the House last debated Bill C-7, mental illness as the sole underlying condition was explicitly excluded from the eligibility criteria for accessing medically assisted death. The explanation to allow for it is therefore obviously significant. It requires additional scrutiny. It was not part of the justice committee's study of the legislation, and members of the committee did not have the opportunity to hear from mental health advocates on this expansion. There has not been an adequate parliamentary review of this change.

In addition to that, and of greater concern, there is no consensus in the medical community that mental illness should be considered irremediable. There is no consensus that MAID should be expanded to include persons with mental illness.

The Liberal government is amending this legislation at the end of the parliamentary process to, as I can imagine, avoid scrutiny by ramming it through the House. To proceed with this significant expansion of MAID would be absolutely reckless. This legislation endangers vulnerable Canadians and, frankly, we owe them better. We owe the one in five Canadians who struggle with mental health and mental illness better.

There are a range of effective treatments available for mental illness. However, we know that access to these treatments is limited. That is where the focus of the government should be. It should be focused on providing additional mental health supports, not recklessly expanding MAID.

The need to improve access to mental health supports has been even more pressing during the pandemic. We know that the pandemic is negatively impacting the mental health of many Canadians. We have heard about the impact that pandemic restrictions have had on the well-being of seniors in particular. Depression and loneliness are spiking, and I am reminded of the heartbreaking stories of seniors who chose MAID. They did this to avoid continued isolation during the pandemic.

To only offer a person MAID when they are at their most vulnerable point is indefensible. For those who have a mental illness, the only attainable tool in their tool box cannot be medically assisted death.

There is a serious and reasonable concern that expanding MAID to include persons with mental illness will undermine suicide prevention initiatives and recovery-based care efforts. In fact, the justice minister's own department has expressed that concern. This reckless amendment paves the way for Canadians suffering from mental illness to prematurely end their life.

We also cannot ignore the fact that this legislation continues to pre-empt the required parliamentary review of the existing MAID framework. The Liberal government's entire agenda of broadening access to medical assistance in dying in advance of that review is, on its own, deeply concerning. We have heard from persons with disabilities and medical professionals who have clearly stated that the expansion of MAID in Bill C-7 is dangerous and requires greater scrutiny.

As the Liberal government continues down this path of broadening access to MAID without ensuring proper access to appropriate care, it is actually eroding the value we place on human life. It is robbing a person of the opportunity to live with dignity.

• (1930)

Medical assistance in dying should not be a solution to all forms of suffering, but as the government broadens access to MAID to persons whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable, we as a society are moving away from medical assistance in dying and ultimately toward medical-assisted suicide. The underlying message of moving in that direction is that death is a treatment for suffering.

It is my core belief that as a country, government, society and community, we have a responsibility and moral obligation to care for one another: to care for the elderly, the poor, the sick, those with disabilities and the vulnerable. We cannot sidestep our duty to care by offering death as a treatment for suffering. If the desired goal is to increase personal autonomy, we cannot accomplish that without meaningful choice. We certainly cannot do that at the expense of ensuring appropriate safeguards to protect vulnerable persons.

The united voice of disability advocates across the country who have come out in strong opposition to the bill should give all of us great pause. Shamefully, the Liberal government is not putting on the breaks. Rather, it is moving forward, full steam ahead, ignoring the serious concerns that this legislation is fast-tracking the deaths of persons with disabilities.

By removing the reasonably foreseeable death clause in the current MAID framework, this legislation opens MAID up to persons with disabilities who are not themselves when close to death. Simply put, this legislation is discriminatory and promotes ableist assumptions. Intended or not, it suggests that the lives of people with disabilities are not worth living. Instead of ensuring that a person with a disability has the accommodations and supports they need to thrive, it offers them medically assisted death as a solution.

This is particularly salient when we consider that concerns regarding a lack of appropriate safeguards for persons with disabilities in the existing MAID framework pre-existed this legislation. The former UN special rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities expressed concerns to the Liberal government on this very issue. She raised the issue that there were no protocols in place to ensure that a person with disabilities was offered viable alternatives to assisted death.

She recommended to the Liberal government that it investigate allegations that persons with disabilities were being pressured into seeking medical assistance in dying. She also recommended that safeguards be in place to ensure that persons with disabilities are not requesting MAID simply because there are no other appropriate alternatives available to them. These same concerns have been raised by disability advocates across the country. However, the justice minister and the Liberal government have not addressed them. Instead, they are removing and weakening the safeguards that were in place.

If we as a country offer MAID to the vulnerable while depriving them of adequate care and the resources to have a dignified, secure and healthy life, then we have failed them. We cannot pursue increasing personal autonomy at all costs. We cannot, in the name of autonomy, sacrifice safeguards for the vulnerable, undermine suicide prevention efforts, erode respect for human life and perpetuate negative stereotypes about age, abilities or illness. There has to be a balance.

Certainly, we cannot make decisions lightly without proper scrutiny and review, and that has not happened. The Liberal government has not allowed a parliamentary committee to hear from a single witness about expanding MAID to include those with mental illness. It is ignoring the pleas and serious concerns raised about this legislation. It has limited debate on it and continues to delay a mandated parliamentary review of the existing MAID framework.

I urge all members of the House to oppose the Liberal government's attempt to recklessly adopt significant amendments to this legislation in the final hours, and to oppose its efforts to steamroll these legislative changes through this place without proper scrutiny and care. Let us do our proper due diligence on this legislation. We owe that to all Canadians and the lives that hang in the balance.

• (1935)

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I point out that the issue of discrimination was squarely before the court in Truchon and the findings are exactly the opposite: that not making MAID available to those who are not at the end of life, including persons with disabilities, violated their competence, their autonomy and their dignity.

The second point is that scrutiny has been provided with respect to this bill. One hundred and thirty-nine MPs have spoken, and 45 hours of debate have occurred. On three separate occasions, given the opportunity to extend debate to discuss these very amendments, the Conservative Party turned it down.

Would the member opposite agree that it is entirely speculative to say that the only thing that will be offered to persons who are mentally ill is MAID, which I believe is what she effectively just stated, given the fact that even under the current regime of Bill C-7, prior to the Senate addressing it and working to amend it, there were already protocols in place, such that one must be informed of counselling, mental health supports, disability supports, community services and palliative care, and that those must have been discussed and appropriately considered?

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• (1940)

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:** Mr. Speaker, as somebody who worked on the front lines and experienced failed suicide attempts of children and adults coming into a hospital and who needed help, and as somebody who has seen first-hand another option being suggested as easier, or people being offered a suggestion of looking at something else, it is a very fine line with who that is being offered to. This is why we have such an important and weighty decision. We do not want to be the catalysts, at least I do not want to be a catalyst, in the premature death of somebody who may be considered vulnerable because they may be homeless or may have a disability.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her speech.

I find it somewhat presumptuous to say that there will be no safeguards for people with mental health problems, given that we will still have 24 months to provide better guidelines for dealing with this situation.

The member also spoke of the need for support. Would that not actually be an option to consider? Should we require a person to have tried certain forms of support or medications before they can seek MAID? It may be worthwhile to consider this solution and discuss it. What does the member think of that?

[English]

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:** Mr. Speaker, I spoke about the balance of autonomy. We have to make sure that the cost of autonomy will not be people falling through the cracks. Just last fall, there was a senior from Ontario, who I referred to in my speech, who decided on MAID because she did not want to live through another lockdown. I hope that we can offer hope to people, and that medical practitioners are being first given the opportunity to offer hope as opposed to suggesting MAID, because it happens. People suggest something else might be easier. We saw it also with a Canadian in Ontario to whom it was again suggested that this was an option, and that is completely unacceptable.

**Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is very important for all of us to step back and reflect or, I would say, take a pensive pause when it comes to major decisions such as this. When we have seen legitimate concerns from associations such as Inclusion Canada, the Canadian Mental Health Association and other groups that are looking at this and saying this is literally a life and death situation and life and death legislation, should we not take the pause?

*Government Orders*

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:** Mr. Speaker, we absolutely have to take the pause because there has not even been a review of the existing framework, which was supposed to be done already. COVID can be used as the excuse, but I do not think we should just leave it up to chance that good things will be done or safeguards will be put in place.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her speech, which truly was a speech of hope. As always, it is a pleasure for me to stand today to speak for the citizens of Oshawa, but especially those who are most vulnerable, those who today may be at their lowest point. Hope is exactly what they need.

Today, we are commemorating a year since we have been locked down with COVID. I think of all of us here and in our constituencies. I think the increased mental health issues, the suicides, the anxiety and the overdose deaths. I feel so sad that today the government brought in closure for this bill. It is shutting down debate on Bill C-7, and the irony is not lost.

This is a substantially different bill than was originally debated in the House. It is substantially different from the bill that was studied in committee. It is substantially different because it opens up MAID, medical assistance in dying, to those with mental health issues.

Last month, many of us contributed to Bell Let's Talk Day. I remember being a parliamentary secretary when Bell started this initiative. Everyone was very supportive of it. I was so happy that Bell took this on. I applauded and supported them. In the House were saying to those who were suffering from mental health issues that their lives were important, and we all embraced that House.

Last night I was watching T.V. and I saw the commercial put out by CAMH. It was quite sad. It is a man who is sitting alone, and it talks about "not today". It is about someone who is down and at his worst and needs that support. I do not know if members have seen it.

It is important that we get the opportunity to debate principles. If we look at our legal system, it is based on the principle that it is wrong to take an innocent human life. When the state is making an exception to this principle, it is incumbent that we are very careful. Why? Because the results are permanent and irreversible.

The original bill that was provided to the House had many things that the people Oshawa could support. However, substantial changes have been made by the Senate that would open MAID up to those with depression and mental health issues. I cannot support this changed bill. Frankly, I am extremely disappointed and upset with the government. The Liberals are not even allowing us to properly debate this new bill. They have invoked closure.

Today, the minister said that there was consensus, but that is simply not true. The minister said of the original bill that there was no consensus on MAID for people with mental illness. Instead of allowing committee to call witnesses affected by the bill, and the experts, the minister wants to push this bill through tonight and close down debate. He wants to pass this bill and then create a committee of experts to study the bill. This is exactly the opposite of the normal process of the House. We are here today making Canadians

aware of that, because this is unprecedented. I have never heard of this before. It is almost like the government telling us to trust it, that it is going to do this, not to worry about it and to let us get this through. However, the minister and the government have a credibility issue.

I know I am challenging the minister, and I hope he questions me about it. He needs to make things clear. The original MAID bill was due for a legislative review after five years, which was supposed to happen last year. That did not happen. We know the government prorogued. We know it had the WE scandal it wanted to cover up. If it did not do its legislative duty for the original bill, how can Canadians trust the Liberals and the minister to follow through? Instead of challenging the Quebec court's decision, the minister did not even defend his own legislation, and I find this incredibly unusual.

● (1945)

We are talking about trust, and when people are depressed and at their lowest, they need a government they can trust. In Oshawa, we have one of the most prominent experts in palliative care. Her name is Gillian Gilchrist. She practised medicine for over 50 years. She started a palliative care clinic in 1981 and was the first chair. I called her today, and she told me that when people are on a cliff, they need someone to trust. They need someone to talk to. They need someone to care. They need someone to be there. They need someone to talk them down. She said our system needs more resources for people with mental health issues.

Proper medical care is expensive, but MAID is not. I heard the Liberals say today that no one is forced to choose MAID. However, we have heard colleagues today in the House, and I think some of our Bloc colleagues said over and over today, that we need more resources for health care. I would argue that we need more resources for mental health care, because when Liberals say that no one is forced to choose MAID, if there is no proper mental health help available and there is no one to talk to, no one to listen, no one to care and no one to say "not today", I submit there is no choice. Until the government invests more in mental health care for that choice, the only option offered is MAID. How sad is that?

I am suggesting that the minister has to address his credibility problem. Today he said he has consensus for the bill, but in committee he said there is not consensus for MAID for people with mental health issues. I have a letter from Vulnerable Persons Standard. This letter has been signed by 129 organizations, which tells us that the minister does not have consensus.

The Liberals were mandated to do a legislative review of the original bill after five years. That would have been last year, but, as I said earlier, instead of doing what they were legislated to do, they prorogued to cover up a scandal because they have a credibility problem. I say they cannot be trusted to follow through on this one either.

This is not from Conservatives. Three United Nations experts have warned the minister that Bill C-7 will violate international human rights conventions to which Canada is a signatory, but the minister is closing down debate today. Canadian legal experts warned that Bill C-7 will violate the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, but the minister is closing down debate today.

The people of Oshawa and the people of Canada expect us to debate these difficult issues and to study this bill at committee. This bill is sanctioning the taking of the life of someone who is mentally ill and the taking of someone's life when the mental health care system is not there for them, someone who is depressed, someone who is at their most vulnerable and someone who is reaching out to us for their voice and their life. What is more important than that?

Today I am sad because I fear our system will fail. It will fail Canadians with disabilities and with depression who want real choices. It will fail Canadians who want us to listen to their views, who want to be given the opportunity to hear from experts in committee, who want to make sure someone is there for Canadians with disabilities and depression to tell them "not today".

• (1950)

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier the member posed a question for one of my colleagues about associations or groups that support the direction of this legislation. I would put it to him that the Quebec Psychiatric Association has raised valid questions about how this could be handled going forward, not purporting to have all of the answers but at least guiding some of the conversation, as well as Dying with Dignity.

Second, I would put to him that there is a serious danger with regard to the expiration of the last court deadline extension that was granted. If it lapses, then the safeguards, which the member opposite and some of his party colleagues have termed "insufficient safeguards", such as the 90-day assessment period and having at least one expert among the panel of assessors being an expert in that particular condition, would lapse in their entirety.

He talked about choice at the end of his commentary. The narrative I would put to him is that we, on this side of the aisle, believe that this bill, in its current incarnation and with the amendments proposed by the Senate, is about facilitating choice, including very permanent and serious choices for those—

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

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**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the parliamentary secretary. He is a very smart individual who is arguing this with, let us just say, an extremely academic framework.

I asked earlier if the Liberals could come up with one association in favour of what they are doing. This letter includes 129 associations, not individuals, that are against what the Liberals are doing. He has not come up with names. He said they kind of have ideas.

My issue with the Liberals in terms of the choice on this is that they have no credibility. They were supposed to review the original legislation after five years, which was a year ago. Instead of looking after Canadians, the Liberals prorogued Parliament and let this go, and now at the last minute they are trying to push this through. They have no credibility. We cannot trust them.

• (1955)

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to my Conservatives colleagues speak all day.

It is clear to me that no matter what guidelines or safeguards are in place, they absolutely do not want to make medical assistance in dying available in cases of mental illness.

We have been talking about depression, so would my colleague acknowledge that there are some psychiatric illnesses that cannot be treated with drugs or other methods and that cause intolerable suffering?

[English]

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is asking a valid question. It is not that we do not want MAID for people with mental health issues; the issue is that it has not been studied. I am surprised that my colleague from the Bloc is believing the Liberals. The Bloc members stood up today asking for more resources for the health care system. Of course, the Liberals are not going to be giving such to the provinces, which is provincial jurisdiction.

What I was talking about are valid choices, and also legitimacy in the process. The Bloc members believe that the Liberals will form a committee of experts after the fact. I say they have no credibility. They did not do the review when they were supposed to do it, and the member should not be naive in thinking they are going to convene the proper committee afterward.

**Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague speaks with such an even and measured tone and yet with such power and eloquence.

It seems that the current government has a habit of picking and choosing when it wants to follow science, when it wants to follow medicine, when it wants to adopt United Nations resolutions and when it does not. I am going to quote an article from a week ago, reported by the CBC, citing the renowned psychiatrist, Dr. Mark Sinyor:

### *Government Orders*

The United Nations Office of the Commissioner of Human Rights, for example, recently put out a statement condemning the practice [of MAID] for those with disabilities on the grounds that it will lead to a devaluing of their lives.

How is that consistent with following United Nations directives?  
How is that consistent with following science and medicine?

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his work on this issue, because this is so important: this is life and death.

Regarding the United Nations, it was not just one expert with the United Nations who said that, but three. The Liberal government consistently quotes the United Nations when it is convenient.

What I am saying today to Canadians is that the Liberals have no credibility. They knew they had a legislative duty to review the original bill. They failed to do so. They did not do it. They prorogued Parliament because of a scandal. They want to twist the entire process backwards with this substantially new bill. It should be going to committee. We should hear from the people who are affected and the experts in the field, and then move forward with the process.

All we are asking for is a reasonable process to move forward with a life-and-death bill. Please, tonight, will my Liberal colleagues vote—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I support medical assistance in dying, and I know what I am talking about.

Thirteen years ago, when I was a member of the Quebec National Assembly, I was part of the group that spent six years studying medical assistance in dying. It took six years for Quebec to come up with a policy on MAID. I voted in favour of that policy.

Five years ago, I was part of the parliamentary team that brought together senators and members of the House of Commons to discuss the first version of MAID at the federal level. A few weeks ago, I voted in favour of Bill C-7 in the House, and I was not alone: 15 Conservative members voted in favour of Bill C-7, including men and women from Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta.

I am in favour of MAID, and I am in favour of Bill C-7, but that is not what we are debating this evening. We are debating the senators' amendments to Bill C-7. The amendment we are most concerned about relates to the Senate's decision to open the door to MAID for people with mental illness. Quebec studied this issue for six years and never looked at the mental illness element. Five years ago in the House of Commons, mental illness was not part of the conversation. Mental illness was not a factor in the first iteration of Bill C-7. Even the current Minister of Justice told the parliamentary committee that there was no consensus around this issue in Canada.

Now some senators have decided to bring MAID for mental illness into the conversation without the notion ever having been debated or studied in the House of Commons, and the government is supporting the Senate's stance.

I am very surprised and disappointed because, earlier, the Minister of Justice said, "Canada is ready to accept this practice". That is surprising. What is he basing that on? This is the same person who said a few weeks ago that there was no social consensus on the subject in Canada. Now, he is even saying that there is a consensus across Canada.

Everyone has the right to change their mind, but there is a way of doing that, particularly when the person in question is the Minister of Justice. Why did the minister not have, shall I say, the courage to address this issue in the original version? Why did he go through the Senate to say that we must move forward?

It is not just people like me who are concerned about this. Take, for example, the *Toronto Star*, which is not a very conservative group. An article on this issue in that newspaper said:

[*English*]

The potential for abuse is both obvious and frightening.

[*Translation*]

That was in the *Toronto Star*, but it gets better.

The Justice Department's own website still states the following regarding extending MAID to those whose only underlying condition is mental illness, which is precisely what the Senate amendment is all about:

...could be seen as undermining suicide prevention initiatives and normalizing death as a solution to many forms of suffering.

The Department of Justice still has that posted on its website. This is the department led by the same Minister of Justice who today said that Canadian society was ready for this practice and that there was a consensus in society.

This is all to say nothing of the many groups, such as first nations, that oppose this, much like a number of psychiatrists' and psychologists' associations, because, at this point in time, there is still no scientific proof that mental illness is irreversible, unlike the other issues associated with MAID and with which I agree.

I am even prepared to reopen the debate and allow for consent from people with incurable cognitive or neurological diseases, such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's, which can cause terrible suffering. That is my opinion. I am open to that, but we all know people who have struggled with emotional or mental illnesses all their lives. These people have their ups and downs, and sometimes those downs are very low and may involve suicidal thoughts. Are we prepared to give them the option of medical assistance in dying in these circumstances?

As the Department of Justice website says, this could normalize "death as a solution to many forms of suffering." Those are not my words. That is a quote from the Department of Justice.

● (2000)

In closing, there were a lot of questions suggesting that the Conservatives did not want to debate this bill. That is completely false.

First of all, the reason we are struggling to meet this very tight deadline is entirely the government's fault. It was the government that decided to prorogue Parliament for six weeks this summer, forcing the House to go back to square one with the review of this bill, which was already under way. The prorogation caused the House to lose 25 sitting days. What is more, the government dragged its feet. If this bill was so important to the government, it could have introduced it the day after the Speech from the Throne in September. Instead, this government waited seven days before introducing it. It dragged its feet, it took no action, and it is the government's fault we are late. That is where we are with Bill C-7.

Let us now talk about the Senate amendments. The Senate voted on a Wednesday evening. The very next day, we were prepared to debate the amendments, but first they needed to be brought before the House. However, the first thing the government did was say that the Conservatives were calling for an extension. We did no such thing. It was the government that requested an extension.

Rather than taking a stand and immediately tabling the Senate's amendments in the House, the government asked the court to extend the deadline. That was its choice and its right. This government accuses us of dragging our feet, and yet it took five full days to respond when everyone knew which amendments would be adopted and which would be declined. That was its right and its responsibility.

Twelve hours after the government tabled its proposal for the Senate amendments, the debate began in the House and lasted a full day. However, the government never put the debate on the Senate amendments back on the agenda for the subsequent regular sittings of the House. It could have done so on the following Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, or on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday of this week, or even today. Instead, it decided to move a closure motion today. That is its right, I acknowledge that.

However, I take exception to people, and in particular the government, saying that the Conservatives do not want to have this debate. That is completely untrue. This is not a matter of politics or party allegiance. The Conservatives have some serious concerns about making medical assistance in dying available to people with mental illness. The NDP shares this point of view and is against the bill, so members need to stop saying that this is a right-wing opinion. Some people are in favour of the bill, while others are against it. That is all.

I was one of the 15 Conservative members who voted in favour of Bill C-7. I support medical assistance in dying, but not for people with mental illness.

In a few minutes, we will vote on the amendment proposed by the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, which would remove the amendment that deals with mental illness and allow us to proceed with Bill C-7 as is.

I am calling on all parliamentarians: if they have any doubt whatsoever about MAID for people with mental illness, I am asking

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them to vote in favour of our amendment. They could then go on to vote for the rest. If they have any doubt, our amendment removes that provision and accepts the rest of Bill C-7.

● (2005)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 8:07 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the amendments tabled by the Senate to Bill C-7 now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is on the amendment.

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

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask for a recorded vote.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

● (2040)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question is as follows. Shall I disperse?

**Some hon. members:** No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

● (2100)

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

(*Division No. 71*)

### YEAS

#### Members

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Aboultiaf                                | Aitchison                                |
| Alleslev                                 | Allison                                  |
| Angus                                    | Arnold                                   |
| Ashton                                   | Atwin                                    |
| Bachrach                                 | Baldinelli                               |
| Barlow                                   | Barrett                                  |
| Benzen                                   | Bergen                                   |
| Berthold                                 | Bezan                                    |
| Blaikie                                  | Blaney (North Island—Powell River)       |
| Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis) | Block                                    |
| Boulerice                                | Bragdon                                  |
| Brassard                                 | Calkins                                  |
| Cannings                                 | Carrie                                   |
| Chiu                                     | Chong                                    |
| Collins                                  | Cooper                                   |
| Cumming                                  | Dalton                                   |
| Dancho                                   | Davidson                                 |
| Davies                                   | Deltell                                  |
| d'Entremont                              | Diotte                                   |
| Doherty                                  | Dowdall                                  |
| Dreeshen                                 | Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) |
| Duvall                                   | Epp                                      |
| Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)          | Falk (Provencher)                        |
| Fast                                     | Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)        |
| Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)               | Gallant                                  |
| Garrison                                 | Gazan                                    |
| Généreux                                 | Genuis                                   |
| Gladu                                    | Godin                                    |
| Gourde                                   | Gray                                     |

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|                                    |                 |                                     |                                |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Green                              | Hallan          | Dong                                | Drouin                         |
| Harder                             | Harris          | Dubourg                             | Duclos                         |
| Hoback                             | Hughes          | Duguid                              | Duncan (Etobicoke North)       |
| Jansen                             | Jeneroux        | Easter                              | Ehsassi                        |
| Johns                              | Julian          | El-Khoury                           | Ellis                          |
| Kelly                              | Kent            | Erskine-Smith                       | Fergus                         |
| Kitchen                            | Kmieciak        | Fillmore                            | Finnigan                       |
| Kram                               | Kurek           | Fisher                              | Fonseca                        |
| Kusie                              | Kwan            | Fortier                             | Fortin                         |
| Lake                               | Lawrence        | Fragiskatos                         | Fraser                         |
| Lehoux                             | Lewis (Essex)   | Freeland                            | Fry                            |
| Liepert                            | Lloyd           | Garneau                             | Gaudreau                       |
| Lobb                               | Lukiwski        | Gerretsen                           | Gill                           |
| MacGregor                          | MacKenzie       | Gould                               | Guilbeault                     |
| MacKinnon (Gatineau)               | Maguire         | Hajdu                               | Hardie                         |
| Manly                              | Martel          | Holland                             | Housefather                    |
| Masse                              | Mathysen        | Hussen                              | Hutchings                      |
| May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)         | Mazier          | Iacono                              | Ien                            |
| McCauley (Edmonton West)           | McColeman       | Jaczek                              | Joly                           |
| McKay                              | McLean          | Jones                               | Jordan                         |
| McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo) | McPherson       | Jowhari                             | Kelloway                       |
| Melillo                            | Moore           | Khalid                              | Khera                          |
| Morantz                            | Morrison        | Koutrakis                           | Kusmierczyk                    |
| Motz                               | Nater           | Lalonde                             | Lambropoulos                   |
| O'Toole                            | Patzer          | Lametti                             | Lamoureux                      |
| Paul-Hus                           | Petitpas Taylor | Larouche                            | Lattanzio                      |
| Poilievre                          | Powlowski       | Lauzon                              | LeBlanc                        |
| Qaqqaq                             | Rayes           | Lebouthillier                       | Lefebvre                       |
| Redekopp                           | Reid            | Lemire                              | Lightbound                     |
| Rempel Garner                      | Richards        | Long                                | Longfield                      |
| Rood                               | Ruff            | Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)         | MacAulay (Cardigan)            |
| Sahota (Calgary Skyview)           | Saroya          | Maloney                             | Marcel                         |
| Scheer                             | Schmale         | Martinez Ferrada                    | May (Cambridge)                |
| Seebach                            | Shields         | McCrimmon                           | McDonald                       |
| Shin                               | Shipley         | McGuinity                           | McKenna                        |
| Singh                              | Sloan           | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) | McLeod (Northwest Territories) |
| Soroka                             | Steinley        | Mendès                              | Mendicino                      |
| Strahl                             | Stubbs          | Michaud                             | Miller                         |
| Sweet                              | Tochor          | Monsef                              | Morrissey                      |
| Uppal                              | Van Popta       | Murray                              | Ng                             |
| Vecchio                            | Vidal           | Normandin                           | O'Connell                      |
| Viersen                            | Vis             | Oliphant                            | O'Regan                        |
| Wagantall                          | Warkentin       | Pauzé                               | Perron                         |
| Wagh                               | Webber          | Plamondon                           | Qualtrough                     |
| Williamson                         | Wilson-Raybould | Ratansi                             | Regan                          |
| Wong                               | Yurdiga         | Robillard                           | Rodriguez                      |
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| Alghabra          | Amos             |
| Anand             | Anandasangaree   |
| Arseneault        | Arya             |
| Badawey           | Bagnell          |
| Bains             | Barsalou-Duval   |
| Battiste          | Beaulieu         |
| Beech             | Bendayan         |
| Bennett           | Bergeron         |
| Bérubé            | Bessette         |
| Bibeau            | Bittle           |
| Blair             | Blanchet         |
| Blanchette-Joncas | Blois            |
| Boudrias          | Bratina          |
| Brière            | Brunelle-Duceppe |
| Carr              | Casey            |
| Chabot            | Chagger          |
| Champagne         | Champoux         |
| Charbonneau       | Chen             |
| Cormier           | Dabrusin         |
| Damoff            | DeBellefeuille   |
| Desbiens          | Desilets         |
| Dhaliwal          | Dhillon          |

|                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Sahota (Brampton North) | Saini                  |
| Sajjan                  | Saks                   |
| Samson                  | Sangha                 |
| Sarai                   | Savard-Tremblay        |
| Schiefke                | Schulte                |
| Serré                   | Sgro                   |
| Shanahan                | Sheehan                |
| Sidhu (Brampton East)   | Sidhu (Brampton South) |
| Simard                  | Simms                  |
| Sorbara                 | Spengemann             |
| Ste-Marie               | Tabbara                |
| Tassi                   | Thériault              |
| Therrien                | Trudeau                |
| Trudel                  | Turnbull               |
| Van Bynen               | van Koeven             |
| Vandal                  | Vandenbeld             |
| Vaughan                 | Vignola                |
| Virani                  | Weiler                 |
| Wilkinson               | Yip                    |
| Young                   | Zahid                  |
| Zann — 179              |                        |

**PAIRED**

Nil

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the amendment defeated.



The next question is on the main motion.

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

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

• (2115)

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

*(Division No. 72)*

## YEAS

### Members

|                     |                             |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Alghabra            | Amos                        |
| Anand               | Anandasangaree              |
| Arseneault          | Arya                        |
| Badawey             | Bagnell                     |
| Bains               | Baker                       |
| Barsalou-Duval      | Battiste                    |
| Beaulieu            | Bendayan                    |
| Bennett             | Bergeron                    |
| Bérubé              | Bessette                    |
| Bibeau              | Bittle                      |
| Blair               | Blanchet                    |
| Blanchette-Joncas   | Blois                       |
| Boudrias            | Bratina                     |
| Brière              | Brunelle-Duceppe            |
| Carr                | Casey                       |
| Chabot              | Chagger                     |
| Champagne           | Champoux                    |
| Charbonneau         | Chen                        |
| Cormier             | Dabrusin                    |
| Damoff              | DeBellefeuille              |
| Desbiens            | Desilets                    |
| Dhaliwal            | Dhillon                     |
| Dong                | Drouin                      |
| Dubourg             | Duclos                      |
| Duguid              | Duncan (Etobicoke North)    |
| Easter              | Ehsassi                     |
| El-Khoury           | Ellis                       |
| Erskine-Smith       | Fergus                      |
| Fillmore            | Finnigan                    |
| Fisher              | Fonseca                     |
| Fortier             | Fortin                      |
| Fragiskatos         | Fraser                      |
| Freeland            | Fry                         |
| Garneau             | Gaudreau                    |
| Gerretsen           | Gill                        |
| Gould               | Guilbeault                  |
| Hajdu               | Hardie                      |
| Holland             | Housefather                 |
| Hussen              | Hutchings                   |
| Iacono              | Ien                         |
| Jaczek              | Joly                        |
| Jones               | Jordan                      |
| Jowhari             | Kelloway                    |
| Khalid              | Khera                       |
| Koutrakis           | Kusmierczyk                 |
| Lalonde             | Lametti                     |
| Lamoureux           | Larouche                    |
| Lattanzio           | Lauzon                      |
| LeBlanc             | Lebouthillier               |
| Lefebvre            | Lemire                      |
| Lightbound          | Long                        |
| Longfield           | Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) |
| MacAulay (Cardigan) | Maloney                     |
| Marcil              | Martinez Ferrada            |
| May (Cambridge)     | May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)  |

|                                     |                                |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| McCrimmon                           | McDonald                       |
| McGuinty                            | McKenna                        |
| McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) | McLeod (Northwest Territories) |
| Mendès                              | Mendicino                      |
| Michaud                             | Miller                         |
| Monsef                              | Morrissey                      |
| Murray                              | Ng                             |
| Normandin                           | O'Connell                      |
| Oliphant                            | O'Regan                        |
| Pauzé                               | Perron                         |
| Petitpas Taylor                     | Plamondon                      |
| Qualtrough                          | Ratansi                        |
| Regan                               | Robillard                      |
| Rodriguez                           | Rogers                         |
| Romanado                            | Sahota (Brampton North)        |
| Saini                               | Sajjan                         |
| Saks                                | Samson                         |
| Sangha                              | Sarai                          |
| Savard-Tremblay                     | Schiefke                       |
| Schulte                             | Serré                          |
| Sgro                                | Shanahan                       |
| Sheehan                             | Sidhu (Brampton East)          |
| Sidhu (Brampton South)              | Simard                         |
| Simms                               | Sorbara                        |
| Spengemann                          | Ste-Marie                      |
| Tabbara                             | Tassi                          |
| Thériault                           | Therrien                       |
| Trudeau                             | Trudel                         |
| Turnbull                            | Van Bynen                      |
| van Koeverden                       | Vandal                         |
| Vandenbeld                          | Vaughan                        |
| Vignola                             | Virani                         |
| Weiler                              | Wilkinson                      |
| Yip                                 | Young                          |
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| Allison                                  | Angus                                    |
| Arnold                                   | Ashton                                   |
| Atwin                                    | Bachrach                                 |
| Baldinelli                               | Barlow                                   |
| Barrett                                  | Benzen                                   |
| Bergen                                   | Berthold                                 |
| Bezan                                    | Blaikie                                  |
| Blaney (North Island—Powell River)       | Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis) |
| Block                                    | Boulerice                                |
| Bragdon                                  | Brassard                                 |
| Calkins                                  | Cannings                                 |
| Carrie                                   | Chiu                                     |
| Chong                                    | Collins                                  |
| Cooper                                   | Cumming                                  |
| Dalton                                   | Dancho                                   |
| Davidson                                 | Davies                                   |
| Deltell                                  | d'Entremont                              |
| Diotte                                   | Doherty                                  |
| Dowdall                                  | Dreeshen                                 |
| Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Duvall                                   |
| Epp                                      | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)          |
| Falk (Provencher)                        | Fast                                     |
| Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)        | Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)               |
| Garrison                                 | Gazan                                    |
| Généreux                                 | Genuis                                   |
| Gladu                                    | Godin                                    |
| Gourde                                   | Gray                                     |
| Green                                    | Hallan                                   |
| Harder                                   | Harris                                   |
| Hoback                                   | Hughes                                   |
| Jansen                                   | Jeneroux                                 |
| Johns                                    | Julian                                   |

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Kitchen  
Kram  
Kusie  
Lake  
Lehoux  
Liepert  
Lobb  
MacGregor  
MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Manly  
Masse  
Mazier  
McColeman  
McLean  
McPherson  
Moore  
Morrison  
Nater  
Patzner  
Poilievre  
Qaqqaq  
Redekopp  
Rempel Garner  
Rood  
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)  
Scheer

Kent  
Kmiec  
Kurek  
Kwan  
Lawrence  
Lewis (Essex)  
Lloyd  
Lukiwski  
MacKenzie  
Maguire  
Martel  
Mathysen  
McCauley (Edmonton West)  
McKay  
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)  
Melillo  
Morantz  
Motz  
O'Toole  
Paul-Hus  
Powlowski  
Rayes  
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Richards  
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Seeback  
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Van Popta  
Vidal  
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Wilson-Raybould  
Yurdiga

PAIRED

Nil

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9:15 p.m.)





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