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# House of Commons Debates

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Monday, October 6, 2025

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Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 6, 2025

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1100)

[*English*]

### MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM MODERNIZATION ACT

**Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-11, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say good morning to colleagues and to the Canadians who are watching today's debate. I am pleased to rise to open second reading debate on Bill C-11, the military justice system modernization act.

As Canada's new government makes a generational investment in the Canadian Armed Forces, we know that any work to support our forces starts with our people. Simply put, this legislation is about the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces, and it is about ensuring their safety.

[*Translation*]

The people of the Canadian Armed Forces are central to our activities, whether they defend our sovereignty at home, support our allies abroad or serve in wings and bases across Canada. Since taking on this role earlier this year, I have had the great privilege of meeting with hundreds of Canadian Armed Forces members across the country and abroad.

[*English*]

They are among the finest individuals one could meet, and as I am sure all parliamentarians are, I am deeply grateful for their steadfast dedication to Canada and Canadians. It is our responsibility to foster an environment where they feel protected, respected and empowered to serve, free from all behaviours that harm our people, threaten morale and undermine team cohesion, including the reprehensible act of sexual misconduct. Eradicating these behaviours is essential to our operational effectiveness, to recruitment and to retention, and above all, it is the right thing to do.

Through Bill C-11, we are proposing a range of important changes to the National Defence Act, which are designed to support this essential work. Canada's military justice system must not only reflect the values of fairness, accountability and respect, but also uphold the trust Canadians place in the institutions that serve them. Through Bill C-11, we would fulfill the recommendations of former Supreme Court justices Arbour and Fish, and we are taking decisive steps to rebuild and reinforce trust within the Canadian Armed Forces.

First, this bill would remove CAF jurisdiction over Criminal Code sexual offences committed in Canada. With this bill, civilian authorities would have the exclusive responsibility to investigate and prosecute these offences.

Second, Bill C-11 would act on eight key recommendations outlined by former Supreme Court justice Fish in his third independent review. This includes establishing stronger, more transparent appointment processes for senior CAF members who play crucial roles in the military justice system. We are modifying the appointment process and the tenure for the director of military prosecutions and the director of defence counsel services by, first, making them Governor in Council appointees and by, second, changing the director of military prosecutions and the director of defence counsel services' terms to a fixed non-renewable term of up to seven years. We are also modifying the process and authority for the appointment of the Canadian Forces provost marshal, appointed by the Governor in Council, and, finally, changing the title from Canadian Forces provost marshal to provost marshal general to align with the title of other senior designations in the CAF, such as the surgeon general, the chaplain general and the judge advocate general.

Third, Bill C-11 builds on supports provided under the Declaration of Victims Rights by expanding access to victim liaison officers to individuals acting on behalf of a victim.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

Fourth, the bill harmonizes the military justice system's offender information and publication ban provisions with the amendments already made to the Criminal Code in 2023. These comprehensive recommendations that aim to reform our military justice system are only one part of a broader transformation of this institution.

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Among other things, we are making critical changes to how we screen new recruits, how we manage Canada's two military colleges and how we collect, retain and use data on workplace harassment.

[English]

For example, we have instituted a probationary period for new recruits, which allows applicants to enrol and begin their training while the administrative work related to their application file is completed. During this probationary period, applicants must pass the required security clearance check, meet medical standards and show that they live by the CAF's ethics and values. We need to ensure that our military better reflects the country it serves, drawing from the very best people Canada has to offer.

We are starting to see our recruitment efforts pay off. Last fiscal year, we surpassed our recruitment goals, bringing in over 6,700 new regular force members. That is a 55% increase from the year before, but we still have work to do to build a culture that is truly rooted in dignity, inclusion and respect for everyone who serves.

We know we need to keep our foot on the gas and remain laser-focused on creating lasting change. As I previously mentioned, Bill C-11 would fulfill several recommendations put forward in the reviews conducted by former Supreme Court justices Arbour and Fish. We are also making important progress on many of their other recommendations to aid in our broader culture change efforts.

In the independent external comprehensive review, Justice Arbour detailed 48 recommendations on everything from recruitment to training to oversight.

[Translation]

As of July, DND had successfully implemented 36 of these recommendations, and we expect that the remaining 12 will be implemented by the end of the year, although some will take much longer than others to fully implement.

[English]

We are making progress on Madame Arbour's first and second recommendations, strengthening our approach to addressing sexual misconduct by clarifying the full spectrum of terms and definitions into three categories: conduct deficiencies of a sexual nature, sexual harassment and sexual assault. This will ensure that we are better able to address each form of inappropriate conduct through the proper legal, administrative and disciplinary means.

The CAF has also adopted the Canada Labour Code definitions of "harassment" and "violence". This change has made it so that the defence team has one single approach for dealing with harassment and violence in the workplace, applicable to both DND public service employees and CAF members. All incidents of harassment and violence on the defence team will be managed by the workplace harassment and violence prevention program. This addressed Madame Arbour's third recommendation.

• (1110)

[Translation]

We have also acted on recommendations 7 and 9 of Justice Arbour's report by allowing members of the CAF who experience sex-

ual misconduct, sexual harassment, sexual offences or any other form of discrimination based on sex or gender in the performance of their duties to apply directly to the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

[English]

As many members know, the external monitor, Madame Jocelyne Therrien, provides regular public evaluations of our progress in implementing these recommendations, including by releasing biannual status reports.

[Translation]

She published her fifth progress report in early July. In that report, she highlights the sincere desire to improve working conditions for DND team members across our organization, as well as the concrete progress we have made, particularly with regard to integrating new recruits and promoting current staff to management positions.

[English]

Her final and sixth report is expected in the coming weeks. Madame Therrien's thorough and objective assessment of our progress has been critical in informing how we are implementing these recommendations, and we thank her for her commitment, her good guidance and her dedication.

[Translation]

In April 2021, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces launched a comprehensive initiative to align defence culture and the professional conduct of its staff with the fundamental values and ethical principles that we, as a national institution, aspire to uphold.

Since then, we have taken significant steps to shift our culture and bring about meaningful change, including taking action to eliminate systemic racism and discrimination. This work encompasses a wide range of responsibilities, such as developing programs and policies to address systemic misconduct, improving mechanisms for tracking and reporting misconduct and overseeing the creation of a framework for professional conduct and culture that combats discrimination, harmful behaviour, prejudice and systemic barriers.

[English]

To support these efforts, as we reaffirmed in budget 2024, we are investing nearly \$1 billion over 20 years to support the changes to the Canadian Armed Forces, and we are introducing amendments to the National Defence Act to deliver key recommendations to advance culture change. Last year, we also launched a comprehensive implementation plan to guide efforts to address the various recommendations we have received.

We know culture change is incremental, we know it is a step-by-step process that takes time, and we know it requires a sustained and continuous effort, but we also know it is absolutely essential to the well-being and operational readiness of the Canadian Armed Forces.

[Translation]

We will continue to listen to members of the defence team, external stakeholders, communities and partners. We will continue to learn from them as we strive to create a safer and more inclusive work environment. We are making real and tangible progress, but we know that there is still a lot more work to be done.

[English]

While we work to modernize our military justice system and change our culture, we also need to ensure that people affected by sexual misconduct get the support, the care and the resources they need. Much of that work comes from the sexual misconduct support and resource centre.

[Translation]

This centre, which operates independently of the chain of command, recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. It delivers expert advice, guidance and recommendations to armed forces and national defence personnel on all matters related to sexual misconduct.

Among other things, it operates a 24-7 helpline offering confidential support to personnel, information about the options available, advice on helping others and referrals to care and services.

• (1115)

[English]

It also runs the response and support coordination program to provide individuals who have experienced sexual misconduct in a DND or CAF environment with a dedicated civilian counsellor who can help access health services, prepare for police interviews and more. The sexual misconduct support and resource centre also runs a grant program to fund community-based programs to broaden the range of support services available to the wider defence community, and it offers peer support programs in partnership with Veterans Affairs Canada.

[Translation]

I would also like to mention that the independent legal assistance program is another valuable support mechanism for victims. It provides free and confidential legal assistance, including legal information and advice on incidents of sexual misconduct in contexts involving the Department of National Defence or the Canadian Armed Forces. It also provides legal representation for certain proceedings involving criminal offences of a sexual nature, service of

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fences, victim safety and victim participation in the judicial process.

[English]

By offering this timely, independent and trauma-informed support, the program plays a critical role in expanding access to justice and choice for affected persons. This is all in line with Madam Justice Arbour's recommendation 14 of the independent external comprehensive review.

The work I have outlined today is comprehensive and meaningful. We believe, and I think all sides of the House would agree, that it is important. We are taking decisive steps to rebuild and reinforce trust within the Canadian Armed Forces and confidence in our military justice system.

As the House begins debate at second reading of the important piece of legislation before us, I will close by saying this: The time has come for Bill C-11 to be moved swiftly through the House to committee, where it can undergo thorough study and perhaps, with the good will and good faith of all members on all sides of the House, be passed forthwith.

**James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for bringing the bill forward. It was Bill C-66 in the last Parliament, and we never got it completed at second reading.

The minister talked about trust, and I want to ask him why Canadians and the people in the Canadian Armed Forces should trust him and trust the Liberals. We have to remember that one of his predecessors, Harjit Sajjan, was complicit in a cover-up of sexual misconduct of one of the very highest-ranking officers in Canada, the former chief of the defence staff, Jon Vance. When the minister at the time was presented with evidence of sexual misconduct by Jon Vance, former minister Sajjan refused to accept it.

Why should Canadians trust the minister, when his predecessor covered up that sexual misconduct for three long years and refused to accept evidence? The prime minister of the day, Justin Trudeau, was complicit in the cover-up for those three years. Finally, they also sat on the Justice Deschamps report that was commissioned under our previous government, and they never acted on any of those recommendations at that time.

**Hon. David McGuinty:** Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for members of the House to trust a few things. The first thing they should trust is the incredibly important, probative and complete work done by Mr. Justice Fish and Madam Justice Arbour, and their recommendations for improvement.

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The second thing they should trust is the judgment that has been exercised through the commissions of inquiry, which basically indicate that we need to take the question of Criminal Code sexual offences out of the situation where they are located now, which is inside the Canadian Armed Forces and subject to CAF investigation and CAF prosecution, and put them into the police of local jurisdiction. This is something that has received widespread support, including from all sides of the House, with the previous bill that my colleague mentioned.

I think we should really rely on the trust and the judgment of those two independent thinkers and, for that matter, of the victims groups that have spoken very clearly about this.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, let us just say right off the bat that this issue should have been resolved decades ago. When I hear people say that the government has not been proactive enough since the recommendation was made in 2021, I feel like answering that both parties need to look in the mirror. The Bloc Québécois obviously agrees that it is about time.

I am vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and I would say that we are dealing with something really important here, especially if the government plans to increase its national defence spending to 5%. I urge the minister to listen to the testimony of people who have attempted suicide because they feel abandoned by the system.

**Hon. David McGuinty:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. Now we must listen. I look forward to seeing what will happen in committee, and I would like to hear the personal stories of these witnesses. We are more than willing to see if we can improve the bill. There is work to be done.

Today, we are focused on the future and implementing change. I agree that it has taken too long. This bill was introduced in March 2024, and then there was an election. This is the third time the bill has been introduced in the House, and we hope to pass it as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I first want to express my appreciation for the minister's and the government's approach to the legislation and for taking very seriously what they have been hearing from citizens. The approach of taking it outside the CAF, as the minister explained, is a very reasonable one to ensure that there is transparency and consequences for unfortunate circumstances.

I recognize that the bill deals with CAF members on CAF members. Constituents within the riding of Waterloo have shared concerns regarding CAF members on civilians. I would like to hear the minister's comments as to whether the bill would address this or what the approach is on that situation.

**Hon. David McGuinty:** Mr. Speaker, the bill would catch both Canadian Armed Forces members and civilian employees at the Department of National Defence. It is important also for us to recall that recommendation 5 under Madam Justice Arbour's incredibly

comprehensive work is the only recommendation that actually requires legislative change, which is why it finds itself in Bill C-11. That is why we have moved so quickly in implementing so many of the other recommendations. Recommendation 5 is the important recommendation that requires statutory change, as are a series of Mr. Justice Fish's recommendations when it comes to military justice actors.

We are looking forward to formally making those changes, but it is also important to remember that we are well down the path of implementing all 48 recommendations. We have more to do. Our plan is to have those done by the end of the current calendar year. We are moving forthwith. We could certainly use the support of all members of the House to have the bill move through the House with speedy passage.

**Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is encouraging, after over 10 years since the Deschamps report, to see the adoption of the move to remove sexual assault cases to the civilian court. However, in theatre, the military police would still be responsible for this.

What training and dollars associated with this training would go into preserving the chain of evidence, investigation and rape kits? Are there going to be rape kits available, is there a protocol, what is the protocol and, most importantly, for military police here at home and deployed abroad, when is their pay increase coming?

• (1125)

**Hon. David McGuinty:** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the reminder. I should have reminded members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are watching that the pay increase is coming, of course, and it is predicated on years of service, as well as annual bonuses and retention bonuses for instructors and beyond. We are very pleased to be able to offer the most significant pay and pay package increase in a generation. We hope it will help with retention and recruitment. I think we are seeing it in the early numbers, as I mentioned in my speech.

The member raises some very important questions around the capacity of our military police overseas in particular, in theatre or on ships, for example. That is a very good question that I will take back. I will look into the question of rape kits and endeavour to get back to her with more detail.

[*Translation*]

**Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this bill is essentially about justice for victims of the military and its lack of transparency.

About 10 days ago, I attended the premiere of the film *Out Standing*, which is based on the life of Sandra Perron, Canada's first female infantry officer. It is an incredibly powerful film. She started an initiative called The Pepper Pod, which I would like to commend.

Considering the bill before us today, I would like the minister to tell us whether measures are being put in place to support victims in the short, medium and long terms, particularly by investing in initiatives like The Pepper Pod that are created by and for women.

**Hon. David McGuinty:** Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of meeting Sandra a few days ago at the National Arts Centre. What a film, what a story, what a woman, and what an inspiring person. She really helped iron out the details of this bill.

We hope that Sandra's voice, along with many others, will be heard and listened to in committee. If there is progress to be made and improvements to be made, we are here to listen.

[English]

For my colleague who asked a question a moment ago, I just checked my notes, and, yes, rape kits will be available both here and abroad.

**Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I appreciate the minister's presentation.

We know the legislation is sorely needed, and we have noted that the victim liaison officer's position would be appointed through the chain of command. I wonder if the minister would be amenable to making sure this appointment is outside the chain of command so that victims can truly be heard.

**Hon. David McGuinty:** Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting suggestion, and I have taken due note of it.

I thank the member for her contribution.

**James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the shadow minister for national defence, I am always honoured to stand in this place to talk about the great work of the brave women and men who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces and how we can do more to support them, which is what Bill C-11 is trying to do.

The first responsibility of the federal government is to protect Canada, protect our citizens, as well as to protect those who serve us. There has been a rapid escalation of threats, and what we are facing in Canada is continuing to evolve. There is Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. There is the ongoing conflict we are seeing with Hamas first attacking Israel and now Israel's clearing operation to neutralize the terrorists in the Gaza Strip. There is the ongoing escalation we are experiencing in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait as the People's Liberation Army Navy of China continues to escalate in that region, using air power, as well as resources and its coast guard to exercise its power in the region but ignoring international rules such as UNCLOS, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Those hostile powers want our resources, whether in the Arctic or our maritime domain, and they want to be within striking distance of our continent. We have to do more to protect ourselves here and invest in our military. This means supporting those who serve us. As Conservatives, we take our national security very seriously and want to make sure we always put that first and foremost. This is why we have to invest in the people, in their kit and in the training they need to undertake to deal with the hybrid warfare, the asymmetrical warfare, we are experiencing around the world.

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First and foremost, Conservatives have always said and believed that those who serve, who proudly put on the uniform, are the best of the best Canada has to offer. They deserve to have a respectful workplace that is free of discrimination, racism, sexual misconduct, and abuse of authority and position. All members deserve to be respected. We also believe that the victims, those who are dealing with military sexual trauma, deserve justice. We hope this is going to culminate in the move from the military justice system to the civilian system, if the capacity is there and it would actually result in prosecutions and true justice for the victims of sexual trauma in the military.

It has been years: The Liberal government has been in power for 10 years. There have actually been three reports done. The first report came out in 2015, and it is interesting to note that the only time the current Minister of National Defence and I have had an interchange in the House on military sexual misconduct was when he was a member of the third party and the Liberals were sitting way down in that far corner. I was the parliamentary secretary for defence, and he asked a question about what steps we were taking. At that time, we had initiated the Madam Justice Deschamps report, and Justice Deschamps had made 10 recommendations.

Then of course there was an election, and that report sat on the corner of the desk of both former chief of the defence staff Jon Vance and former minister of defence Harjit Sajjan and collected dust. They did nothing during that time. There was then the Jon Vance scandal and all of that, and I will talk about that a bit later.

We know that through the process, the Liberals finally took action. There was the Arbour report and now the Fish report, which brought about some of the things that would happen with Bill C-11. However, it has taken 10 years to get to where we are today. For 10 long years, the Liberals sat on their hands and did nothing to actually change the National Defence Act and the military justice system under it.

● (1130)

When we look at Bill C-11, we are concerned that it would potentially open the door for more political interference. There would be an opportunity for partisan-style appointments, such as the Liberals' giving more power to the minister of national defence to issue guidelines with respect to prosecutions. That would not happen in the normal system in Canada because it would be considered political interference. The Liberals would also be changing the appointment process in that the director of military prosecutions, the director of defence counsel services and the provost marshal are all now going to be appointed by the Governor in Council rather than the minister. We know that when things go into the PMO and into cabinet, things become quite political and partisan.

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Conservatives will continue to support those in the armed forces, and we are going to make sure that we are carefully studying Bill C-11 to ensure that concerns from all stakeholders, including those in the military justice system, those in the defence industry and, especially, those who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as victims' rights groups, and that their voices are heard when we study this at committee.

As I said earlier, Bill C-11 is the former Bill C-66, with minor tweaks in language, translations and interpretation of certain clauses: 6, 67 and 68. It would amend the National Defence Act to transfer jurisdiction of most offences of a sexual nature from the military justice system to civilian authorities, including the courts, municipal police, provincial police and the RCMP. This would depend on the jurisdiction in which the offence takes place, with the exception of a sexual offence that takes place outside Canada when troops are deployed. In that case, those who are deployed would have access to the current regulations under the military justice system and the National Defence Act, and military police and the JAG, the judge advocate general's office, would still undertake those investigations with the national investigative service.

We know that section 273 of the National Defence Act provides for that. It has provided for the way that this has been dealt with historically, but there is concern about whether the civilian courts would have the capacity to take on extra cases in those jurisdictions, from the standpoint of both the court level and the police level. What are they going to do with historic cases? We already know of historic cases that have been transferred into the civilian court system that have not resulted in convictions. Instead, we have seen high-level flag officers and general officers who were found innocent or had their proceedings stayed; we have seen cases that the Crown rejected because of the way the evidence was collected by the military police and the national investigative service of the Canadian Armed Forces. We question whether that provides the justice that the victims were looking for. We definitely want to make sure that all are given a fair trial and that we support those who were erroneously charged in the first place.

What are we doing about the issue of capacity, as was previously asked by my colleague, within the military police and national investigative service when they have to do investigations outside Canada? How do they coordinate with provincial, municipal and RCMP police agencies when we are talking about things that happened on base and will require investigations done by local authorities?

Bill C-11 seeks to increase the independence within the military, one of the recommendations coming from Madam Arbour and Justice Fish, so we would avoid a situation like what happened with Jon Vance. Because he was chief of the defence staff and everybody reported to him, nobody was prepared to take on that investigation and prosecute, including the then minister of national defence, who actually had authority over the chief of the defence staff. Harjit Sajjan refused to accept evidence and walked away.

We know there are questions about how this would all work. The provost marshal, who has traditionally been a colonel, would be made a general, so we are seeing a creep of the number of flag officers again.

Conservatives question the term limits. There is an inconsistency here on how people are being appointed, now being done through order in council in the Prime Minister's Office, and we know there is going to be the ongoing issue of the length of terms: Some are for four years; some are going to be eligible for reappointment whereas some are not. Some are for seven years, and some are for 10 years. It just gets a little confusing in terms of how this is all going to work.

• (1135)

When we talk about the provost marshal general, the director of military prosecutions and the director of defence counsel services, we just want to make sure there is a criterion as to what we want to see for qualifications for service in positions that normally would have reported to the vice-chief of the defence staff and/or the judge advocate general. Those things are going to give these guys their independence, so they report straight to the minister and to the government. There are questions about chain of command and how that is going to work. However, these are things we can look at in committee. The same is true for the director of defence counsel services.

Consistency is important here. Qualifications are important in these appointments. We want to make sure the partisanship that happens within the Prime Minister's Office does not percolate into the Canadian Armed Forces through those who serve the forces.

The minister talked about trust. As I suggested in my question for him, Liberals cannot be trusted, especially when it comes to talking about bad political appointments. If we look at 2022, the Liberals appointed Laith Marouf to do a project. It turned out he was an anti-Semite, but they were supposed to be working on diversity. The Liberals appointed Martine Richard as the Ethics Commissioner. She had to drop out because she was related to one of the cabinet ministers, who currently sits today. It was a complete conflict of interest. They appointed Birju Dattani as the human rights commissioner; he turned out to be anti-Semitic. Of course, it was another terrible appointment by the Liberals.

Justin Trudeau completely ignored the Ethics Commissioner's warning about appointing Annette Verschuren as the head of the green slush fund. This resulted in a huge scandal of over \$2.1 billion that she and her cohorts were able to take from that Liberal slush fund and stuff into their own pockets. We should not forget the current Prime Minister recently appointed Doug Guzman as CEO to the defence investment agency. It turns out Doug Guzman is a former banking buddy of the Prime Minister's from Goldman Sachs.

I do not know if we need to have these close personal friends and partisan Liberal bagmen actually getting these types of appointments. I would hate to see this being the case when we look at appointments within the national defence apparatus, when we look at those who are going to be in charge of our military justice system. That would not be fair.

The Liberals also cannot be trusted when it comes to criminal justice. They have been soft on crime right from the beginning. Bill C-75 brought in the whole principle of restraint, which puts the least onerous conditions on those who are seeking bail. This is where we get bail, not jail and repeat violent offenders going back on the street. Now, potentially, those who are committing sexual assaults within the Canadian Armed Forces will have access to that same lax and soft-on-crime approach the Liberals have implemented.

Bill C-5 is another reason we should not trust the Liberals when it comes to reforming the military justice system. The bill reformed the criminal justice system by repealing mandatory jail time and allowing very serious violent offenders to serve their sentences at home. This includes getting house arrest, not jail time, if they commit sexual assault, sexual interference or sexual exploitation. Those conditions are now going to be transferred from the military justice system, or the Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces, to the civilian system, which the Liberals have almost completely destroyed.

As I mentioned earlier, we cannot trust the Liberals when it comes to dealing with sexual assault in the Canadian Armed Forces; our members know that. Again, it has been 10 years since Madam Justice Deschamps brought forward her recommendations in her report, and they did nothing, which could have stymied this whole problem.

• (1140)

Take Jon Vance, who was CDS at the time. He started up, after the Liberals formed government, Operation Honour, which turned into a complete fiasco and did nothing to support victims, did nothing to stop sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces and did not live up to the code of service discipline and the ethics that those who serve should be living up to.

As I said, we know that Minister Sajjan, at that time in 2018, refused the evidence of the sexual misconduct charge against Jon Vance. We know there are memos that went back and forth between the minister's office and the Prime Minister's Office on how they could cover this up to protect Jonathan Vance and, later, also protect Minister Sajjan for not acting upon evidence that was given to somebody who reported directly to him.

Gary Walbourne, who was the Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces ombudsman at the time, tried to provide that evidence and was pushed away. He was completely in the right because the only person who could deal with it in the chain of command was the Minister of National Defence. We know this went back and forth. We did an in-depth study of this in the Standing Committee on National Defence. I was vice-chair at the time, as I am vice-chair right now.

That was covered up by the Prime Minister's Office through Justin Trudeau, Katie Telford and Zita Astravas. They continued to cover up that sexual misconduct and protect the minister and Jon Vance, which is beyond me. At the end of the day, when it came to charging him and prosecuting within the civilian court, the government accepted the lesser charge of obstruction of justice. It never prosecuted on sexual misconduct and sexual assault. That, again, does not live up to victims' rights in any way, shape or form. The

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victims of Jon Vance still feel that they were never properly served or got the justice they deserved.

This went on. The defence committee was suspended for months on end. The chair of the committee, Karen McCrimmon, refused to hear testimony and motions. She kept suspending meetings. We were in the same meeting for three months and could not do our work as the defence committee, and we could not do our work as parliamentarians. I firmly believe that our privileges as parliamentarians were violated through that process.

We did find out, through that study, that the Privy Council Office, the Prime Minister's Office, former prime minister Justin Trudeau and Katie Telford were all aware of this over the entire three-year investigation.

To make things even worse, at the end of the day, even though Harjit Sajjan, the minister of defence at the time, knew about the sexual misconduct and the gravity of the problem that was happening within the Canadian Armed Forces, the government still gave Jon Vance a raise as the chief of the defence staff. That, I think, was just adding insult to injury.

We know that when it comes to political interference, the Liberals cannot be trusted. We can look at the ongoing F-35 debacle and how they continue to politicize the procurement. Our Royal Canadian Air Force and our Canadian Armed Forces right up to the chief of the defence staff today have all said that this is the jet they need and that we should buy more of them. Of course, the Liberals continue to play political football and kick the can and delay that procurement, which is only undermining the ability of the Royal Canadian Air Force to protect us here at home and work alongside our allies.

We know about things like cash for access and the wealthy Chinese billionaires that Justin Trudeau was involved with. We know they tried to cover up the expensive holiday that the former prime minister took on his private island. The ethics commissioners found multiple breaches. We know about the witch hunt that went after former vice-admiral Mark Norman back in 2018, which was politically motivated.

We cannot trust the Liberals. They have failed our Canadian Armed Forces. They have failed our brave women and men. Our warships continue to rust out. Our jets are worn out. The army has been hollowed out and our troops no longer feel like they are respected and honoured by the government.

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• (1145)

When we really dig in and look at Liberal policies, it is a book of empty promises, like the 2017 defence policy and the defence policy update, which are all irrelevant. The government has allowed money to lapse. Because of this lack of respect for our forces, we have a recruitment problem. We are short over 13,000 troops today. Over 10,000 are undertrained and undeployable. Our forces are short 6,700 houses.

Conservatives will rectify all the mismanagement and wrongs of the Liberal government and serve our Canadian Armed Forces.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are many issues the member has raised that I take exception to, especially when he talks about support for the Canadian Forces. In fact, when he was a parliamentary secretary and his current leader was part of the Harper cabinet, Canada was most in danger of not financially supporting our Canadian Forces, to the degree where it came to 1% of Canada's GDP. In contrast, the Prime Minister's commitment is to achieve 2%. The Conservatives failed in comparison.

Having said that, I think it is important, when we look at the legislation, that the jurisdiction over criminal prosecutions and investigations for sexual offences be the essence and principle of this legislation. That is what Arbour's recommendation number five was all about.

Does the Conservative Party support it? Does the member have any specific amendments he would like to see advanced?

• (1150)

**James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North is always up here defending the government, including its own failures, especially in dealing with sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces. The member was up here defending Minister Sajjan back when he was still the minister. I do not believe the member.

The Conservative government signed on to reach that NATO promise in 2015. We had 10 years to get there. I should remind everyone, before the Liberals started their creative accounting by adding things like veteran pensions and the Coast Guard to the calculation of what military spending is to meet the 2% matrix, that actual spending within the Department of National Defence was just over 1% last year. The Liberals have cut over \$2.7 billion from operations over the last three years, and they also allowed over \$12 billion to lapse.

They can talk the talk, but they have to start walking that talk.

[*Translation*]

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, our colleague spoke at length about the Jonathan Vance case, but both the Conservatives and the Liberals looked the other way in that case and pretended there was nothing to see. There were already rumours about and allegations against Mr. Vance when the Conservatives appointed him as chief of staff and tasked him with taking on sexual misconduct in the military. The Canadian Armed Forces were the subject of allegations at the time and were being widely criticized for their handling of sexual misconduct cases.

Why did the Conservatives not appoint someone unimpeachable to the position? Why did they appoint Mr. Vance despite the rumours of sexual misconduct?

[*English*]

**James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, Jon Vance was appointed in the end days of the Conservative government. I would also say that the Bloc helped the Liberals shut down the study, in 2021, into sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces. It was particularly Minister Sajjan's mismanagement and refusal to deal with the sexual misconduct of Jon Vance. I do not think the Bloc can take much high ground on this.

I would remind everyone that we started the Madame Deschamps report looking into addressing sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. The government had a chance to act upon it but did not.

**Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for an excellent speech.

Obviously, I agree with the Deschamps recommendations and the Arbour report about moving sexual misconduct allegations out of the military justice system and into the criminal justice system. However, the record of the Liberals and the criminal justice system, as we have seen, is this: Sexual assault is up 76%, and these repeat offenders are mostly let out on bail. My concern is that there will not be any justice in the criminal justice system.

Does my colleague share that concern?

**James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-75 reduced the conditions on the principle of restraint, allowing those who commit sexual offences to be released on bail very easily. It allows them to be repeat offenders. That will now permeate the Canadian Armed Forces, as well, because of the soft-on-crime approach taken by the Liberals. With Bill C-5, they got rid of a lot of the mandatory minimums so that repeat sexual offenders can now serve their sentences at home. That includes sexual assault, sexual exploitation and sexual interference.

What is the purpose if those who are committing these crimes are allowed to continue to serve in the Canadian Forces at their leisure?

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during my colleague's remarks today, he mentioned talking the talk.

*Government Orders*

Having worked with victims of crime for over 23 years before I became a parliamentarian, I have seen first-hand the impacts of sexual violence on many victims. Today, I was listening attentively and really hoping to hear comments about how important it is to have a trauma-informed response and rights for victims. Instead, we heard partisan garble. If there are any victims at home today listening to us, I think they would be extremely disappointed with the debate going on with respect to that.

I have a simple question: Does the member not agree that Bill C-11 is an important step forward if we want to make sure that victims have access to justice?

• (1155)

**James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, I said during my speech that victims deserve justice, and that military sexual trauma is one thing we have to eliminate. The support is needed. We support the sexual misconduct support and resource centre and the great work it is doing in providing counselling. As well, it is going to be providing some legal advice to those victims. Victims' rights have to be paramount. That is why we supported Bill C-77. It was to make sure we codified victims' rights in the Criminal Code and moved them into the National Defence Act as part of military justice.

We will continue to fight for victims because that is what this is all about. That is why I raised this flag. Can we trust the government, which has ignored victims' rights for too long by letting repeat offenders back onto our streets? This is now going to permeate the Canadian Armed Forces as well.

[*Translation*]

**Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, obviously, there was a culture of silence. There was the Fish report and the Arbour report. Time passes and the Liberals have not taken action.

What does the member think of the recommendations in this report? What should be put in place? I empathize with the victims who are waiting for answers from this Parliament that never come. What are we to do? The bill is interesting, but we need to go further. What commitments is the member taking?

[*English*]

**James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, the first place to start is accepting all 10 recommendations from Madame Deschamps' report, which was completely ignored by the government. I think we would be a lot further ahead today in supporting victims and stomping out misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces had this been acted upon 10 years ago. The Liberals refused to do it. They still do not even mention the report in their speeches. All they talk about are Fish and Arbour.

We need to make sure that we continue to address all the concerns that were raised. There are about 50 recommendations in the Arbour report. I think there are over 110 in the Fish report. We need to see which ones are doable and that we can act upon quickly.

This is just the first step, but there is much more that needs to be done.

**Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know my hon. colleague has done a considerable amount of work on this.

I sat through a lot of testimony when I served on the national defence committee and the veterans committee. All of the testimony was absolutely horrific and hard to hear. Many of the victims are still in the CAF as we speak. They were when they brought their cases and complaints forward.

How do we ensure these victims are protected under the current CAF structure when they bring these accusations forward?

**James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, it has been a problem. We know that those who brought complaints against Admiral Art McDonald were reprimanded by their superior officers. We know they were coerced. They were scared to come forward and it took, in some cases, years before they did. We created a safe space at committee, allowing them to speak and share their stories where there was no opportunity for retribution by their superior officers.

This is one of the reasons we are supporting parts of Bill C-11. It is to make sure we can take parts of this out of the chain of command and allow victims to stand on their own two feet without fear of repercussion.

[*Translation*]

**Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House as the Bloc Québécois national defence critic to address the government's response to an extremely delicate issue, namely the unfortunate occurrence of sexual misconduct. As delicate as the subject may be, it remains our duty to take a serious look at the bill before us to put an end to this scourge and ensure greater accountability as well as a healthier environment.

Let us not forget that the first allegations date back to 2015, under the Stephen Harper government. They were not yet public at the time, but what we now know goes back to 2015. Back then, former justice Marie Deschamps released a scathing report on sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, which she found had a sexist culture that turned a blind eye to numerous cases of misconduct, and in April of that year, allegations began to surface, first in the back rooms, about the inappropriate behaviour of Jonathan Vance, who had just been appointed the future chief of the defence staff. The investigations went nowhere at the time.

*Government Orders*

On March 1, 2018, under Justin Trudeau's government, military ombudsman Gary Walbourne held a private meeting with the then minister of defence during which he tried to discuss a case of sexual misconduct implicating Mr. Vance. The victim's decision not to pursue the matter had somewhat tied the ombudsman's hands. The ombudsman wanted the minister to intervene to protect the victim because her employment relationship made her Mr. Vance's subordinate and he could easily have destroyed her career. The minister was reportedly closed and hostile. Allegedly, he flatly refused to look at Mr. Walbourne's evidence and abruptly left the meeting.

Instead, the matter was sent to the Privy Council Office. Afterwards, Mr. Walbourne tried 12 times to speak with the minister, who continued to refuse to meet with him until Mr. Walbourne retired a few months later. The Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office exchanged emails to discuss the situation. On March 5, 2018, Janine Sherman from the Privy Council—the body that had taken the lead on the case by then—wrote Mr. Walbourne asking for more information. On March 5, the minister's chief of staff emailed Mr. Walbourne hoping to get more information. However, on March 9, when Vice-Admiral Mark Norman was accused of leaking documents to journalists showing that the Liberals were attempting to cancel a contract with the Davie shipyard in favour of Irving, the Liberals immediately called for an investigation against Mr. Norman. Justin Trudeau personally intervened, saying that Mr. Norman should face justice. There is a double standard here.

On March 16, 2018, Janine Sherman of the Privy Council met in person with Mr. Walbourne, who told her that the complainant did not want to pursue the matter further and was withdrawing her complaint because she had not received assurances that the Minister of Defence would protect her. That is serious. Sworn testimony subsequently given to the Standing Committee on National Defence—at a time when I was not serving on it—stated that several members of Justin Trudeau's cabinet knew about the situation. As for Prime Minister Trudeau himself, he has always denied being told about sexual allegations against Mr. Vance, stating that Mr. Walbourne never forwarded the requested documents to his office and that he was unaware of any such allegations. However, he did not clearly deny knowing that there were unknown allegations against Mr. Vance. He specified that he did not know there were allegations of sexual misconduct specifically. He did not talk about allegations at all. Of course, that did not prevent Mr. Vance's salary increase in 2019, which the Prime Minister signed off on.

The scandal became public in February 2021 when Global News reported cases of misconduct against Mr. Vance, including his relationship with a subordinate and obscene emails exchanged in 2012 with a much younger female soldier. The woman who was in a relationship with Mr. Vance was allegedly threatened by him on several occasions, according to her public statements. Mr. Vance considered himself untouchable and claimed that he owned the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service, which is a serious matter.

• (1200)

The individual named, before he was named, said that he could do as he pleased because he was the one who controlled the process. He thought he was a king.

The Standing Committee on National Defence, of which I was not yet a member, decided to study the allegations against Mr. Vance. The first time he testified, the former minister of defence, Mr. Sajjan, said that he had learned about the allegations against Mr. Vance from the media. He systematically refused to answer questions on the grounds that the matter was before the courts.

The testimony of Gary Walbourne, whom members will recall was the ombudsman, confirmed that he had informed Minister Sajjan and that the minister had refused to even look at the file. That cast the government in a bad light, and rightly so.

Other witnesses who appeared before the committee confirmed that the minister should have taken action and that he had a number of avenues open to him to request an investigation into Mr. Vance. Minister Sajjan appeared before the committee again in March 2021 and, this time, he agreed to speak in an attempt to defend his handling of the file. He said that he had refused to look at Walbourne's file on the grounds that he did not want to insert himself into the investigation himself and that he had not been asked to do so in any case. His explanation fell flat.

The Liberals did not hesitate to obstruct the investigation to prevent Liberal government employees from being summoned to appear before the committee. According to the testimony of Elder Marques, who worked in Justin Trudeau's office, it became clear that everyone around Justin Trudeau knew what was going on. However, Mr. Trudeau himself denied everything.

When other employees were summoned by the House, the Liberals decided to send the defence minister instead and said they would not allow the employees to testify. Well, at least they were clear. The Liberals tried to shut down the Standing Committee on National Defence several times. The committee chair suspended that particular meeting, and the suspension lasted a month.

At both the Standing Committee on National Defence and the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, the Liberals filibustered to prevent the adoption of reports that made recommendations to protect women in the Canadian Armed Forces and to make the military justice system independent from the chain of command.

Unable to escape the scandal, the Liberals decided to give former justice Louise Arbour, who is known for her expertise, the mandate to make the military justice system independent from the chain of command. That was six years after the release of the Deschamps report, which recommended exactly the same measure.

The Liberals realized that they did not know how to handle this problem and that they were starting to get into trouble, so they asked Madam Arbour to rehash the same work and repeat the things that had already been said but not done. At least they were able to buy some time, until she came to the same conclusion as to what had to be done. Even Madam Arbour was surprised when the government contacted her, because, as she said, the work had already been done.

Nevertheless, Madam Arbour's report was released in May 2022. Incidentally, Morris J. Fish had released the "Report of the Third Independent Review Authority to the Minister of National Defence" in April 2021.

That brings us to today, to Bill C-11. Let me be clear: The Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this bill so that it can be reviewed in committee. This bill responds to the recommendations of the two former justices I just mentioned, particularly the parts of their reports dealing with the issue of sexual misconduct. I will now speak to the bill itself.

To address recommendation 5 of the Arbour report, the government wants to definitively remove the Canadian Armed Forces' jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute Criminal Code sexual offences committed in Canada.

The bill also responds to recommendations made by former justice Morris J. Fish by modifying the appointment process for three key military justice authorities: the Canadian Forces provost marshal, the director of military prosecutions and the director of defence counsel services. This turns the appointment process into a political process, because the government, not military leadership, would choose these appointees. That way, they would be sheltered from any form of blackmail.

- (1205)

I would remind members that Mr. Vance, who had sexual relations with a subordinate, allegedly boasted about how the victim could not file a complaint because he had full control over military investigations. I quoted him earlier. This bill would scuttle that possibility. Vance's successor, Art McDonald, also left his position after only a few weeks as a result of allegations of sexual misconduct.

This bill now enables non-commissioned members, whose rank ranges from private to chief warrant officer, to become military judges. This measure accurately reflects today's reality: Many lower-ranking non-commissioned members are more educated than officers. For example, a person can join the Canadian Armed Forces without a diploma at the age of 17 and remain a part-time non-commissioned member, while studying full time to earn university degrees. Generally speaking, non-commissioned members are able to earn more advanced degrees.

Finally, the bill makes other, less substantial amendments, such as enabling victims to get assistance from a "victim's liaison officer". That is a good idea.

Bill C-11 responds to recommendations that should have been implemented a long time ago from reports that should not have been shelved. As such, it requires legislative changes and, in some cases, agreements with the provinces.

One of the most important measures in the bill is the removal of the Canadian Armed Forces' jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute Criminal Code sexual offences that are committed or alleged to have been committed in Canada. In other words, these offences will now be dealt with in civilian courts.

Recommendation 5 was the only recommendation in former Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour's report that required legislation for its implementation. That is why it is the only one of Justice

### *Government Orders*

Arbour's recommendations to be addressed in this bill. However, military personnel can arrest the accused and gather evidence while waiting for civilian authorities to arrive. It is important to understand that.

However, it remains to be seen whether restricting civilian jurisdiction to offences committed in Canada could be problematic. At first glance, the fact that the bill deals only with offences committed in Canada might seem problematic, but it is important to remember that Canadian jurisdiction normally applies during operational deployments abroad. Otherwise, local jurisdiction would apply, when a military member is on vacation abroad or taking part in training abroad, for example. In the end, it amounts to the same thing, although it will take longer to transfer the file to civilian authorities if an incident occurs during a deployment abroad.

Justice Arbour stated the following in her report: "Where the offence takes place outside of Canada, the [military police] may act in the first instance to safeguard evidence and commence an investigation, but should liaise with civilian law enforcement at the earliest possible opportunity."

In other words, the bill goes as far as possible when it comes to granting jurisdiction to civilian law enforcement, but it remains reasonable thanks to several conditions that enable members of the military to gather evidence, for example, if a member is caught in the act and there is no room for doubt.

The bill also responds to eight recommendations made by former justice Fish in his report, including the recommendation to remove the military hierarchy's power to appoint certain justice officials. Recommendation 2 of that report calls for the National Defence Act to be amended to allow the Governor in Council to appoint military judges, who can be either an officer or a non-commissioned member, as long as they are a barrister or advocate of at least 10 years' standing at the bar of a province and have been a member of the Canadian Armed Forces for at least 10 years.

According to recommendation 7, the director of military prosecutions and the director of defence counsel services should be appointed on the recommendation of the Minister of National Defence for a term not exceeding seven years.

Recommendation 8 calls for the repeal of certain subsections of the act that indicated that the judge advocate general can issue instructions or guidelines in respect of a particular prosecution. Rather than repealing these subsections, Bill C-11 amends them to transfer that power to the Minister of National Defence.

*Government Orders*

● (1210)

Recommendation 10 called for a certain section of the act, stating that the judge advocate general has the superintendence of the administration of military justice in the Canadian Armed Forces, to be amended to specify that the superintendence must respect the independence of military prosecutors, military defence counsel and other statutory actors within the military justice system. Bill C-11 therefore amends this section by adding provisions to specify the independence of the provost marshal general, the director of military prosecutions and the director of defence counsel services.

There are also other interesting recommendations, such as the ones calling for the provost marshal of the Canadian Armed Forces to be appointed by the government and for the position to be re-named so that the provost marshal holds at least the rank of brigadier-general, which is the lowest rank for generals.

The fact that the provost marshal would be appointed by politicians, meaning the military would not have the ability to revoke the appointment, gives that individual greater independence. It avoids a situation where a general could boast of having control over the judiciary.

However, the minister may appoint a judge to conduct an inquiry and report on whether they consider it necessary to revoke, suspend or impose other disciplinary or administrative measures against the director of military prosecutions in the event of misconduct.

Another recommendation is that the minister should not have the power to give directions regarding specific law enforcement decisions in individual cases. That is very relevant and important in light of what has happened in recent years. In other words, the minister does not have the power to take the place of the judiciary.

Finally, one recommendation amends another aspect and subsection of the act to allow any member of the military to make an interference complaint to the Military Police Complaints Commission if they believe on reasonable grounds that any military member or any senior official of the department has improperly interfered with a policing duty or function. This will, of course, expand the number of people who can file a complaint, including the victim.

Bill C-11 also removes military judges from the summary hearing system. I would remind the House that summary hearings deal with service infractions, including common offences such as being absent without leave, negligently discharging a firearm, wearing a uniform improperly or maintaining equipment poorly.

Currently, with offences being treated as disciplinary rather than criminal matters and trials being handled by the chain of command, these trials are anything but fair. The unit commander or officer delegated to preside over the trial can judge their own subordinates, and the accused is generally presumed guilty and dealt with summarily. Unfortunately, Bill C-11 does not change any of that.

Bill C-11 also expands access to victim's liaison officers to individuals acting on behalf of the victim. In other words, whereas this service was previously only for the alleged victim, a person representing the victim may now have access.

Finally, the National Defence Act is amended to ensure that the sex offender information and publication ban provisions align with

the Criminal Code. Those amendments were, of course, necessary to ensure that the military justice system is aligned with the Criminal Code.

Those are the reasons we will support this bill at this stage. However, we reserve judgment on its final adoption until the Standing Committee on National Defence, on which I have the honour of serving, has conducted a thorough review.

Having said that, we are finally here, after a very long process. There have been so many years of neglect, and unfortunately, there was a bipartisan consensus to turn a blind eye to this issue and to filibuster at committee. However, we are glad to finally have something. Is it going to address all of the issues? Probably not, but at this point, we are happy that we have something. We will look at this bill and try to improve it if necessary.

● (1215)

**Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have worked with my colleague on the Standing Committee on National Defence. It is truly a pleasure to work with him.

I just want to know whether we can count on the Bloc Québécois's support to have the Standing Committee on National Defence study this bill as quickly as possible. We expect to have acted on all of the recommendations in the Arbour report by the end of the year. I want to know whether the member will support this bill so that it can go to committee.

**Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, the Bloc Québécois will be supporting the bill at this stage so that it can be studied in committee.

**Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. It was extremely well researched.

When such situations arise, situations involving threats and sexual assault, whether verbal or physical, it is clear that there is a difference between rumours, proven facts and the aftermath. Unfortunately, I must say that the Liberal government buried the victims' stories. The member has clearly demonstrated that.

My question for my colleague is this: Given everything he has said about the cover-up by the Liberal government, how can he trust the government to move forward appropriately, positively and with an eye to the future for similar situations?

● (1220)

**Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague well enough to know that he loves asking this type of rhetorical question. The answer is often in the question. He is gesturing at me, denying it. At least he is smiling. I think he knows that I am close to the mark and that the shoe fits.

*Government Orders*

I would say that it is indeed a real scandal. That being said, I do appreciate the nuance he mentioned about the difference between an allegation and a charge and between an assertion and a demonstration. Obviously, due diligence is always required.

In fact, Quebec has already taken steps in this direction. This idea was already advocated by Véronique Hivon, who proposed creating specialized courts. It was felt that the system itself was not adequate.

I digress. Let us come back to the military cases. I am not overly confident in the Liberal government, but it is presenting us with a bill that, at this stage, I believe deserves our close attention. There are enough interesting elements in it that respond to a report that was not produced by the government itself.

Of course, if we see that it needs to be improved, we will exert pressure to ensure that it is. If there are still cover-ups, as my colleague says, we will do our job as the opposition, of course, to exert the necessary pressure to ensure that this does not happen.

However, at this stage, there are enough interesting elements for us to want to take a closer look at the bill.

**Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton for his excellent speech and for raising the level of debate on such an important bill. Obviously, this culture of military silence has had very serious consequences for a great many victims.

Speaking of silence, Minister Sajjan's silence spoke volumes. Going forward, this bill gives the minister greater responsibilities.

What happens if we still have a minister who refuses to act? Can we trust a minister with that much power in the current context? Should we suggest amendments in this regard in committee?

**Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, that is a fairly fundamental issue. Honestly, we will be watching this closely. That is why an in-depth study is so important. As a number of people have already pointed out, the government's previous version of the bill, which died on the Order Paper, did not properly address the problem. We will do an in-depth study.

That said, I agree with the government's reason for wanting to increase this power, which is simply because it should be removed from the oversight of simple military command. There is a good reason for that.

Is that the answer? We will have the opportunity to take a closer look at this, to shed light on it and to examine it closely very soon.

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my Bloc Québécois colleague for his excellent speech. I greatly appreciated his overview of the bill.

I think we all agree that we want to ensure that victims will have access to justice. We also want to ensure that victims will have access to the services and resources they need when they file a complaint because we acknowledge what a difficult and traumatizing process that can be. In addition, we want to ensure that we continue to maintain a trauma-informed approach.

I also understand that the member and the Bloc Québécois will be supporting Bill C-11, but he said he would reserve judgment.

Can my Bloc Québécois colleague tell us what changes he would like to make to Bill C-11 to improve it?

**Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, I have only one reservation, which is that we are not going to blindly trust anyone or any bill that is voluminous by nature, that has legal implications and for which the devil is in the details, as with any document of this nature. That is why I am simply saying that we need to do our job properly. When the government presents us with a bill, we, as an opposition party, cannot simply support it outright and accept it at face value. This is what I am referring to when I say we are going to study it carefully.

● (1225)

[English]

**Tako Van Popta (Langley Township—Fraser Heights, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is signalling that the Bloc Québécois is going to support the bill.

An important part of the bill is that trials for sexual assault and sexual harassment would be taken out of the military courts and brought into the civilian courts, but given the delays in our civilian courts, is the member confident that victims of sexual assault and of sexual harassment will see justice in a speedier and more fair way in civilian courts?

[Translation]

**Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, the civilian court problem is very real, as our colleague mentioned. Obviously, the bill does not directly address that issue. The issue remains to be addressed. I think it would be better to ask the Minister of Justice about that matter.

That said, it is definitely a consideration. I understand that sending these cases to the civilian court system could result in longer processing times for certain files, but for now, longer processing times are better than the risk of improper handling. It is probably the lesser of two evils. Then, the issue of processing times needs to be addressed immediately, and I completely agree that this is a critical issue.

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I must say that my colleague clearly explained the events that took place. Earlier, I tried to explain what happened with both parties here, and I hope this bill will not die on the Order Paper. Why? Every week, I meet with people who say that they have been the victims of alleged sexual misconduct, harassment and so on.

*Government Orders*

For veterans who are watching at home right now, does my colleague agree that we need to invest not only in legislation but also in services for victims?

**Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague. Impunity must be replaced with accountability. The bill puts forward a plan to do just that. The bill broadens access to what I believe are called victim's liaison officers to include individuals acting on behalf of victims. In other words, it is not just alleged victims who will have access to this service; their representatives will too. Expanding access is a good idea. It is not the main thrust or the most substantial element of the bill, but it is still very important. These are good things that are worthy of mention, and so I completely agree with my colleague on that.

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as we saw, the Conservatives turned a blind eye by appointing Mr. Vance chief of the defence staff even though rumours of sexual misconduct were already circulating. The Liberals did even worse. I will come back to my colleague's suggestion. Should we not find ways to ensure that the process is not completely controlled by those with political power?

**Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, the reason for transferring power to politicians is precisely to get it out of the military's hands. This should help avoid situations like the one where Mr. Vance said he controlled the judicial process. Now, we will have to look very closely at whether it is better to—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

[English]

**Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Bay of Quinte.

• (1230)

[Translation]

It is with great pride that I rise today at the second reading of Bill C-11, which proposes a fundamental reform of the military justice system. This issue is particularly close to my heart. I have two sons and a daughter-in-law who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces. I am extremely proud of them, as I am of all CAF members and the sacrifices they have made for our country.

[English]

I am a proud military mom. One of the reasons I entered public service was to ensure that members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families receive the care and support they deserve for the sacrifices they have made. That is exactly why Bill C-11 matters so much.

Those who protect us deserve to be protected in return. Victims of harassment and sexual assault in the military must be able to report abuse without fear of reprisal.

[Translation]

With this bill, we want to ensure that victims can pursue their perpetrators in civilian court, free from the pressure of the chain of command. We must strengthen the system to help survivors heal

from their trauma, provide them with options that respect their dignity and allow them to make decisions without fearing for their future in uniform.

[English]

Bill C-11 is grounded in two landmark independent reviews, one by former Supreme Court justice Morris Fish and the other by former Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour.

Justice Fish's independent external comprehensive review, published in 2021, examined how our military justice system functions, from investigation and courts martial to oversight and accountability. He found that while the military justice system is vital to maintaining discipline and operational effectiveness, it must also align with the core principles of Canadian justice: independence, fairness and respect for the rule of law.

[Translation]

Justice Fish made 107 recommendations, several of which are aimed at strengthening civilian oversight, transferring the handling of sexual offences to civilian courts and increasing accountability within the chain of command. Bill C-11 directly addresses these recommendations by modernizing the system and bringing the military process more in line with the civilian process.

[English]

A year later, Justice Louise Arbour was asked to go even deeper, to look not just at policies but at the culture and power structures that shape behaviour inside the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence. In the preface to her report, she wrote words that should stop us all:

For years, women were simply shut out.

When finally allowed to serve, women were made to feel they did not belong... They were harassed, humiliated, abused and assaulted, and, appallingly, many continue to be targeted today....

Indeed, the exposure of sexual misconduct in the CAF has caused as much damage as defeat in combat would have to demoralize the troops and shock Canadians.

[Translation]

Those words are a call to action. Justice Arbour's report contains 48 recommendations for rebuilding trust and accountability. Recommendation 5 is key: the exclusive prosecution by civilian authorities of all Criminal Code sexual offences alleged by members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Bill C-11 implements that recommendation. Serious offences, including sexual offences, will now be handled by the civilian justice system, offering the survivors the same protections as all Canadians.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Our government has already acted on an interim basis to implement this recommendation. Since late 2021, all new allegations of Criminal Code sexual offences involving CAF members have been referred to civilian police and prosecutors. Bill C-11 now makes that practice permanent, providing clarity, consistency and confidence to survivors and to the system as a whole.

General Jennie Carignan, when she was the chief professional conduct and culture, met with over 16,000 members of the defence team and the Canadian Armed Forces. Those 16,000 voices have told us again and again that change must be real, structural and lasting.

*[Translation]*

Members of the armed forces must have confidence in their justice system. Survivors should not fear telling their story or forfeiting their military career.

*[English]*

As our government emphasized in “Our North, Strong and Free”, harassment, discrimination and violence in any form have no place in the Canadian Armed Forces. Such behaviour causes lasting harm and undermines Canadians' trust in their military institutions.

- (1235)

*[Translation]*

That is why it is imperative to act now. I applaud the fact that the other parties in the House expressed their support for Bill C-66 in the last Parliament in a spirit of non-partisan collaboration.

*[English]*

Justice must not only be done; it must be seen to be done.

*[Translation]*

Bill C-11 will strengthen the independence of military judges, enhance oversight of military police and ensure that serious offences, including sexual offences, will now be dealt with by the civilian justice system. It will improve transparency and accountability, which will help restore public trust and encourage more Canadians to serve in a fair and reliable system.

*[English]*

Our government is also taking concrete action. We have established the sexual misconduct support and resource centre, fully independent from the chain of command. We have introduced a digital grievance form to lower barriers for reporting. We have repealed the duty to report, restoring choice and agency to survivors. We have also launched the Canadian Military Colleges Review Board to strengthen accountability in our institutions.

*[Translation]*

These measures show that we are not merely talking about intention, but also about implementation. They will enable future generations to serve in a safer, more inclusive and more respectful environment.

*[English]*

Bill C-11 is not just aspirational. It would enshrine these changes in law, embedding independence, fairness and protection for survivors into the very structure of the National Defence Act.

*[Translation]*

It is the right thing to do for our military personnel, and it is the right thing to do for our country, but this is just a start.

*[English]*

As a proud mother of serving members, I hope my own family and all members of the Canadian Armed Forces will never need to rely on these protections, but for those who have suffered in silence, who have lost faith in the system and who fear coming forward, we see them, we hear them and we are committed to getting this right. They have our backs, and we must have theirs.

I urge all members of this House to support Bill C-11. Let us get it to committee for thorough study and demonstrate that supporting members of the Canadian Armed Forces is truly non-partisan. We need to do this. We need to get it right for them.

**Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I volunteered at the Cambridge Legion for several years, and I am always proud to support our veterans and those serving in our armed forces. We all know that veterans put so much on the line for our country, and all they want is support from our government, but the Liberals have passed legislation like Bill C-5, allowing criminals convicted of sexual assault to serve their sentences at home. In a military context, that could mean that right around the corner from their attacker on a small base, some could still reside.

Does the minister agree that we should repeal Bill C-5, stop soft-on-crime policies and protect not only CAF victims but all victims of sexual misconduct?

**Sherry Romanado:** Mr. Speaker, today is about victims of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. We had the opportunity in the last Parliament to get Bill C-66 done, but unfortunately shenanigans in the House prevented us from doing that and it died on the Order Paper.

We are in line to getting all the recommendations in the Arbour report completed before the end of the year. I urge my colleagues not to play partisan politics and make personal attacks, and urge them to support us in getting this bill to committee so we can do a proper study of it and move it along for victims.

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite a thing to deliver a speech about something one has experienced first hand.

My question is very simple. Everyone knows that this bill was desperately needed. However, will my colleague also be able to devote all her energy to helping everyone who may have been or may become victims, both our veterans and employees of National Defence? Can she ensure that she will be there to help our people?

• (1240)

**Sherry Romanado:** Mr. Speaker, I was elected in 2015. I have always worked closely with veterans' communities and their families. I was parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs from 2017 to 2019, and I still have phone numbers and I still get text messages from veterans and their families to this day.

I want to remain committed to those who served our country and their families.

[*English*]

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know that veterans and serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces are my friend and colleague's top priority.

During your speech today, you indicated that Justice Arbour consulted with over 16,000 individuals. I am just wondering if the department and the minister himself consulted with victims as well.

How do we anticipate the reaction of survivors with respect to this legislation? We all know that making a complaint of this nature is very difficult. I am just wondering if we have received any feedback from survivors.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Members will address questions through the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Sherry Romanado:** Mr. Speaker, it was Jennie Carignan, the current CDS, who met with over 16,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I know the Minister of National Defence is always speaking to members of the Canadian Armed Forces, veterans and their families. They asked us, based on Justice Arbour's recommendation, to move the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault cases to the civilian system. We are listening to them. We will continue to listen to them. We will always listen to them.

**Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this member's commitment to our veterans and our military, and appreciate her the sacrifices her family has made to serve this country.

The member brought up in her speech that the bill would make permanent something that was already brought into effect, I believe in 2021, with respect to the civilian prosecution of sexual misconduct cases. I do not know whether the member has the data on hand, but could she commit to providing, when this bill gets to committee, how many of these cases have been sent to civilian authorities and how many have been denied? Are there any results she could provide?

**Sherry Romanado:** Mr. Speaker, I will make sure the information is provided to committee members when this bill gets to committee.

I want to thank the member opposite. We have worked together on many files, and it is always a pleasure to work with him.

**Chris Malette (Bay of Quinte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to thank the brave men and women of our Canadian Armed Forces for their service to Canada and Canadians.

It is with great pride that I rise today to speak at second reading of Bill C-11, the military justice system modernization act. Now, more than ever, we need to invest in the tens of thousands of brave men and women of our Canadian Armed Forces, who work hard every day to protect Canada's sovereignty and security. Every day, Canadian Armed Forces members don the uniform and stand ready to protect and defend the people of Canada. That is why our people remain at the core of everything the Canadian Armed Forces does. When someone chooses to serve our country, it is our duty as the government to make sure they have every tool necessary to do so.

It is also our duty to make sure they are treated right. Victims of harassment and sexual crimes in the Canadian Armed Forces should not have to worry about the consequences of reporting what has happened to them to their superiors or an internal legal system. With the legislation we are proposing, we would make sure this no longer happens. We want to ensure that these victims can pursue their cases in civil court, outside the military system and far from reprisals from their superiors.

To bring about meaningful cultural change and change that will stand the test of time, we must reform the system to help victims and survivors of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. We must give them options and recourse that do not ostracize or isolate them, but, rather, do the opposite. We must ensure that they feel free to make their own decisions without fear of impacting their future careers in the Canadian Armed Forces. They have our backs. We must have theirs. Make no mistake that supporting our Canadian Armed Forces is a top priority for our government. We will ensure fairness and justice for victims and survivors.

*Government Orders*

The proposed changes in this legislation would have a direct impact on members of the Canadian Armed Forces in my very own riding, Bay of Quinte. My riding is home to CFB Trenton, also known as 8 Wing Trenton, which is Canada's largest and most strategically important air force base. CFB Trenton is also the largest employer in Quinte West, with more than 4,500 personnel, and it has a significant economic impact on the region. These are precisely the people we are supporting through this legislation. Bill C-11 would help us build a more inclusive, respectful and safe workplace for all of our Canadian Armed Forces members to survive and thrive, including members who serve at CFB Trenton.

We have made considerable progress over the last several years to enact meaningful and durable culture change in the Canadian Armed Forces, including by working to implement all 48 of former Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour's recommendations, as others have previously outlined. By implementing Justice Arbour's recommendations and making changes to the military justice system through Bill C-11, we are taking a major step to make sure we keep our brave soldiers safe from harassment and misconduct in their workplace.

A career with the Canadian Armed Forces is a source of unique pride and confidence among those who have the privilege to serve. Our priority, then, as a government is to build a more inclusive and supportive fighting force. It is important to grow a Canadian Armed Forces that reflects the diversity of Canada and Canadians. We know that a more modern military with an inclusive culture will also have a positive impact on recruiting and retaining members.

We are building a 21st-century workplace where Canadian Armed Forces members will feel safe to report incidents. Our forces expect this of us. They expect a workplace where CAF members are treated fairly. In other words, changing the culture of DND and the CAF is not simply the right thing to do; it is essential to the readiness and operational effectiveness of our institution, and it has tangible impacts.

This year, recruitment has reached a 10-year high. We are on an upward trajectory, but there is more to be done, and Bill C-11 is part of our plan to create a safe workplace environment and change in the culture inside the Canadian Armed Forces. Our government has heard the voices of our people loudly and clearly. We have listened and we have acted. We now know there is much more work to be done, but we are making concrete and measurable progress. Bill C-11 demonstrates that anyone who wishes to join the CAF will have access to a fair and reliable legal system.

I want to reiterate the importance of Bill C-11. It would lay the foundation for an improved military culture by modernizing the military justice system, improving support to victims and providing exclusive jurisdiction to civilian authorities to both investigate and prosecute Criminal Code sexual offences committed in Canada. We believe Bill C-11 is an important step in a journey designed to achieve durable and lasting institutional reform.

• (1245)

In conclusion, members of our armed forces serve our country with courage and dedication. That is why it is important for the government to take the need to change military culture seriously. Therefore, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this crucial

bill to change the lives of our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces for the better. I hope we can all work together to make sure that Bill C-11 passes quickly. Our forces are counting on us.

I want to thank our brave armed forces, especially those at CFB Trenton my riding, for their sacrifice and service to our country.

**Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are some things in the member's speech that we agree on. They have our backs and we must have theirs. That is extremely important. We also agree that everyone should be safe from harassment.

The Borden base is in my riding. I am very honoured to represent the men and women of the military who serve and have served in that area.

I used to sit on the veterans affairs committee, and what I have noticed since being elected in 2019 is that a lot of the same issues are being repeated over and over by the government, which has been in place for 10 years. We are studying some of the same issues again and again, such as individuals dealing with PTSD or getting another job after service.

Why would the public believe now that any of this would help any of the people who are serving today and those who have served? For 10 years, it has been the same thing over and over, with lots of promises and absolutely no delivery.

• (1250)

**Chris Malette:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his service to his riding and to the men and women of CFB Borden.

I believe this government is committed to righting the wrongs of the past, as we have seen with some of our legislation, especially Bill C-11, which is a prime example of how we are doing that in a modern Canadian Armed Forces.

General Jennie Carignan is a prime example of the kind of personnel we have shepherding in this kind of change. In my life prior to being elected, I was employed at CFB Trenton. I had the chance to sit in and listen to a town hall held by General Carignan. She said unequivocally exactly what the member opposite was saying: We are making change and we mean what we say.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, earlier, I asked my colleague whether anything would be done to address the needs of people with post-traumatic stress or people who have been the victims of physical harm. Obviously, she told me that there definitely would be.

How is my colleague going to manage things with an upcoming 5% increase in defence spending and only a few days left to check and see whether funds will also be available for prevention and treatment? What is he going to do to ensure that funding is made available for that purpose?

[English]

**Chris Malette:** Mr. Speaker, we are very committed in the new funding for our Canadian Armed Forces to providing services for veterans with PTSD. In fact, in my own riding office, I employ a veteran who looks specifically after the needs of members who serve and have served, current and past. We are addressing those needs directly and immediately. We take this very seriously.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Madam Arbour had 48 recommendations in total. Many of those recommendations have already been put in place. We are hoping to see the others passed this year. We hear criticism about why it is taking this long. It is important to recognize that in 2021, we received the interim report, and within the year, we were already seeing cases being shuffled over through the civil system. The legislation we are debating today would put the process into law.

I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on that. Would it not be nice to see the law in place before the end of the year so that we can say all 48 recommendations have been adhered to by—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The hon. member for Bay of Quinte.

**Chris Malette:** Mr. Speaker, I had the occasion in my previous life as a journalist to cover sexual assault trials in the court martial system, and I can tell my colleague that while the system was efficient and got the job done, it was in no way, shape or form the proper system whereby the victim had all the protections of a civil case. The legislation before us is guaranteed to right that wrong. We have listened and we will get the job done.

[Translation]

**Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

I rise in the House to address two crucial issues that go to the heart of our national security and our commitment to those who serve our country. The first issue is in regard to Bill C-11, the military justice system modernization act, a piece of legislation that would fundamentally reform our military justice system. The second issue is in regard to the urgent need for a complete overhaul of the Canadian government's procurement process for military equipment, an area that has been totally neglected and plagued by chronic delays and inefficient bureaucracy. Together, these issues under-

score the urgency of protecting our military and strengthening our defence.

Let us start with Bill C-11, which is basically a repeat of Bill C-66 from the 44th Parliament, with minor adjustments. This bill amends the National Defence Act to transfer jurisdiction over sexual offences to civilian authorities when these offences occur within Canada. This measure is in response to key recommendations in the reports by Justices Deschamps, Fish and Arbour, which the Conservatives have always supported.

We firmly believe that all members of the Canadian Armed Forces deserve a safe and respectful workplace, free from sexual misconduct, discrimination, racism or harassment. Those of us on this side of the House will continue to address these issues, putting victims' needs and rights first, in accordance with our criminal justice policy.

However, this bill is not without its flaws. Offences committed abroad will still be under the Canadian Armed Forces' jurisdiction, which is consistent with section 273 of the National Defence Act. This discrepancy poses problems. By removing the CAF's jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute cases of sexual misconduct in Canada, there is a risk of losing essential practical skills. How will the Canadian Armed Forces maintain their expertise if they no longer manage their internal affairs?

One positive aspect is the increased independence of the director of military prosecutions, the director of defence counsel services and the provost marshal general. These positions will now be appointed by the Governor in Council, reporting directly to the Minister of National Defence, with limited terms of office. This strengthens their independence outside the chain of command.

The provost marshal will be added to the list of senior officials, along with the chief of the defence staff and the deputy minister, who must have any complaints against them reviewed by the minister. However, there are still some inconsistencies. There are arbitrary differences between these positions with regard to their term of office and whether it is renewable.

What is more, this bill grants the Minister of National Defence more power to issue written instructions or directives on particular prosecutions. That opens the door to potential political interference, a risk that we, as Conservatives, cannot ignore, especially given the Liberal government's track record of interference.

Financially speaking, this bill is alarming for accused persons. Right now, the Department of National Defence covers the prosecution and defence costs, but in the civilian system, accused persons would have to pay for their own lawyers, whose fees could reach six figures. That could discourage justice and expose members of the Canadian Armed Forces to false accusations without support.

Despite the Deschamps, Fish and Arbour reports, victims are still waiting for justice after 10 years under a Liberal government. We, the Conservatives, accepted all of the recommendations in the Deschamps report, and we cannot understand why the Liberals have been dragging their feet for so long. We want to hear from everyone involved. We are proud of our men and women in uniform and we support them unconditionally.

*Government Orders*

Since we are talking about the Canadian Armed Forces, I would be remiss if I failed to mention the serious need for a complete overhaul of the government procurement process for military equipment and services. This inefficient and outdated system is filled with red tape and engenders costly delays that weaken our defence.

According to open sources, like government reports and media analyses, Canada has had equipment procurement issues for decades. For example, projects like the Canadian Army vehicle procurement project, which is worth up to \$1 billion, face significant barriers, chronic delays and skyrocketing costs.

The Prime Minister, who, we must remember, is a former Goldman Sachs banker, is responsible for accelerating defence spending in order to meet our NATO commitments. We were supposed to reach a minimum of 2% of gross domestic product, but demands are currently reaching 5%.

• (1255)

There are consequences to that. Right now, we all agree on the idea of investing more in defence. However, there is always a “but”. That “but” is the procurement system. The Liberals will tell us that, last week, they announced a new agency. Again, it is a new agency. All this government has done since it came to power is create new bureaucratic structures.

However, there is a way to manage much more efficiently with the current structure by giving specific directives to the public servants and deputy ministers in place at National Defence, at the procurement service and in the industry. That way, the government would not need to create a bureaucratic structure that will take time to set up and might work eventually, but, for the time being, only adds more red tape.

Things can move quickly if the will is there. Here is the proof. When the Conservative government was in power and we were at war in Afghanistan, we had urgent equipment needs on the ground. This included planes, helicopters, vehicles and personal protective equipment. Former prime minister Harper issued a directive indicating that he wanted to have equipment as quickly as possible, on time and on budget. It got done. Where there is a will, there is a way. The proof is that this happened under the Conservative government. On the Liberal side, they like to build a big bureaucracy, but decisive operational leadership can get things done too. This would go a long way to improving Canada's military procurement system, which has been a train wreck for the past few years.

We do need to reform the military justice system because this system has become a problem, particularly in cases of sexual assault. However, we should keep in mind that a dichotomy will be created by the loss of capacity within the teams that are currently responsible for prosecuting cases that occur abroad versus those that will be responsible for civilian proceedings in Canada. It is important that we have a system that ensures that military judge advocates working on the front lines, as well as the commanding officers carrying out their duties abroad, retain their expertise. We must not lose this strength.

On the military procurement front, we have moved beyond the stage of fine words. We have responded to a request from the U.S.

and NATO, and we want to move forward. However, too many companies in the defence sector are still coming to me saying that they are unable to reach anyone within the Government of Canada. No one answers their calls, their emails or their requests. They have a much easier time selling equipment in other countries, while in Canada, their hands are tied. I am not talking about one company, but several companies at all levels, from major multinationals to small companies that make equipment as commonplace as chests for storing weapons, but also other equipment that could be used right now on the ground in Ukraine. A company in Montreal has to sell its equipment in Great Britain in order for that equipment to reach Ukraine because Canada is not answering its calls.

These are observations. As far as Bill C-11 is concerned, we support the idea, but there are adjustments to be made. This has been dragging on for a very long time. I do not know why we are still talking about something in 2025 that should already have been resolved. Let us hope that things speed up and that adjustments will be made. As for military procurement, it is high time that we acted quickly for the Canadian Forces, for the security of the country.

• (1300)

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in 2021, the interim report had 48 recommendations, many of which have already been completed. We are hoping to complete others before the end of the year. That is the goal, and that includes the passage of this particular piece of legislation. The member is trying to give the false impression that nothing is moving forward. Within a year of the interim report being brought forward, we have seen cases shifted over to the civilian justice system. That is a very strong positive.

Does the member not agree that we can collectively send a very strong message to the members of our armed forces by sending this legislation to committee stage? The committee is best suited to listen to the feedback. It seems to me we should try to get this done before the end of the year. Would the member not agree?

[Translation]

**Pierre Paul-Hus:** Mr. Speaker, I think some information got lost in translation.

I mentioned that it was taking a long time, but I did not say that nothing had been done. I said that it was still taking way too much time. I also said that we supported the idea of Bill C-11, but that adjustments were needed. We will probably be able to make the necessary adjustments at the committee stage.

I was generally criticizing the length of time it is taking, although some steps have been completed.

*Government Orders*

• (1305)

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is rare to see all the parties agree to move a bill forward through the legislative process. From what I understand, everything will get done in committee.

I see that there is goodwill and that members want to make good recommendations and pass a good bill. Will my colleague's party lend a hand so that we can finally carry out this agenda that should have been implemented years ago?

**Pierre Paul-Hus:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, we supported the Deschamps, Fish and Arbour reports, which were published in recent years. In fact, we were the ones who commissioned the first report.

It is extremely important for us that this problem be resolved. We have always collaborated. We complain about the government moving at a snail's pace, but every time we have amendments to propose, they are based on reality and aim to make things better. We are not proposing amendments just to slow down the process. If we propose an amendment, it is because we think it is essential to do so. That is what we will do.

Obviously, if the government agrees to the Conservatives' amendments, the process will move more quickly. That is our goal.

[*English*]

**Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his service in uniform. I know that he, as a former commanding officer, was responsible for discipline and for maintaining the code of service discipline and the National Defence Act within his unit.

One of the concerns he addressed in his speech is the fact that these cases have already started going over to civilian courts, but we are seeing such a backlog. Is he concerned about victims actually getting justice in the civilian courts, due to the challenges we are seeing across the country right now with the civilian justice system?

[*Translation*]

**Pierre Paul-Hus:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, who is also a veteran and a former commanding officer. He likely had to conduct summary trials like I did.

One of the problems we are seeing right now is that cases are being added to the backlog of other cases in the civilian justice system. That can hurt victims. That is one of the concerns that we Conservatives have. We agree with the principle, but if this bill causes more problems for members of the Canadian Armed Forces when it comes to justice, then we have not improved anything.

That is why we need to find a way forward.

**Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, I want to thank the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for serving our country.

I just have one question. Does the Conservative Party currently support passing Bill C-11?

**Pierre Paul-Hus:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, there are a number of things that need to be addressed. That is why we are asking the government to make amendments and propose changes before going any further. These are fundamental issues.

At this point, we are dealing with problems that have not yet been resolved.

[*English*]

**Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not want to say this is a tough bill or a tough speech for me to give, but I do have my own unique military background, which includes having spent 25 years in the Canadian Armed Forces, and I spent a lot of that time as a presiding officer. Fortunately, as a presiding officer, I did not have to oversee sexual misconduct cases. Those would go to court martial and were never in my purview.

Let us back up to how we got to where we are today. Reference has been made to Madam Arbour's report, and before that there was Madam Deschamps' report. I want to share with everyone how shocked and disappointed I was when the Deschamps report came out. I was literally flabbergasted.

The Canadian Armed Forces is representative of a cross section of Canadian society. We are going to have bad apples and phenomenally good people. I was somebody who was an infantry officer, who served in a combat arms unit, which gets a bad rap a lot of the time, and I had never personally witnessed any of these cases. It was shocking when it came out because I had not had feedback shared with me by my former female colleagues in our Canadian Armed Forces. I reached out once that report came out and asked some of them about it. Some of them were senior officers. The horror stories that I heard just absolutely blew me away. Unfortunately, there have been challenges within the Canadian Armed Forces when it comes to sexual misconduct and justice for the victims being delivered.

I am sharing this because it is important that we get it right. We cannot just overreact. The military is no different than any other organization. Sometimes a solution creates two other problems. We have to make sure we are looking at this from all angles, both for the victims and the accused. The reason I bring up the accused is that we just have to go back over the last half-dozen years or so to see that some very senior officers had allegations brought up against them that in the end turned out to be unsubstantiated. In some cases, the officers were acquitted.

One of my best friends, a still-serving brigadier general, has done a phenomenal job. This goes back to almost 10 years ago. I think it was around 2015 when he was unjustly accused. Fortunately, due to the system finally sorting it out, he has been able to successfully maintain his career in the Canadian Armed Forces. He has been promoted a couple of times since then and currently serves.

I am just bringing that up because it is important that the system works in an impartial way to address the issues. We absolutely have to stamp out any sexual misconduct that occurs anywhere in society, while at the same time making sure that due process is followed.

*Government Orders*

There are about five elements to this bill from a summary perspective. I want to touch on each one of them slightly, except for one. The first one is that it obviously amends the National Defence Act to transfer jurisdiction of sexual misconduct offences to civilian courts when they take place here in Canada.

The parliamentary secretary talked about this in her speech. I asked her how it is working so far, and she is committed to getting the data. This ties into another question that I had already asked. We now have about three-plus years of data. I want to know how many cases are being accepted by the civilian courts. What are the findings? Are any of them being delayed? I am concerned about the Jordan principle, because, again, if justice is delayed, these victims will not get the justice they need.

Another aspect to this transfer is that, unfortunately, the cases that occur overseas while our military members are deployed would still be prosecuted by our military police within the Canadian Armed Forces and within our military justice system, with its prosecutors and judge advocates general. This was a question that was brought up during a technical brief. It was asked, and I do not want to say we have been reassured, but the government has been talking about the fact that there is going to be training. My concern is that training has to be really good because why are we saying that our military police, judge advocates general and the military justice system are not good enough to deal with cases here in Canada, but they are good enough when they happen overseas?

● (1310)

Those are the first two points of the bill that would change certain things.

Another aspect of the bill is that it would increase the independence of the director of military prosecution, the director of defence counsel services and the provost marshal general by having them appointed by the Governor in Council and report directly to the minister of national defence with term limits. I am not going to get into depth on that. I do think there are questions that can be asked in the review process of the bill as to how it would actually change anything internally or externally with the independence.

I think it is a little, I do not want to say mythical, but in my experience, and I can speak only from my experience, our military police were very much granted independence for everything they did. It was very much frowned upon and stamped out if somebody in the chain of command tried to interfere with the process going forward. I have had nothing but positive feedback in dealing with our military police, our national investigation service and our judge advocates general in the prosecutions that have taken place.

I talked about the importance of the data. One of the issues, though, that needs to come up as well is that if somebody is alleged to have done something wrong in the military system, they are provided with military defence counsel, but as soon as a case goes into the civilian courts, and if it is one of our soldiers, sailors or air crew who has been alleged to have done something wrong, they are no longer entitled to military defence; they are on their own dime.

I have already provided one example, and there are a couple of others I can think of, where the people who have been alleged to have done something wrong went through the process, and rightly

so, but when it was determined that they in fact had done nothing wrong, it cost them literally tens of thousands of personal dollars, if not more. Their only way to get any coverage back was to sue the government or the Department of National Defence and the chain of command, to be reimbursed through civil litigation, which takes way more time.

It is a question I have; I do not know what the right answer is. I am hoping that when the bill gets to committee or goes through the amendment processes, the government considers how it is going to handle that.

What I want to talk about in the last bit of my speech is a bit more technical in nature. I have asked the question; I have not gotten a response back from the ministers or the department yet, but it is interesting that the bill would lay out a deadline for the provost marshal general, as it would now be called, to provide an annual report, a deadline of three months. I am wondering, so it is more of a question the government can take note of because I do not have a response yet, why was there not a similar timeline included for the judge advocate general when the government was updating the military justice system with the bill? They are mandated to provide an annual report, but there is no timeline on it.

The second question I have that is tied to the previous one is this: What is the “so what”? What would be the repercussions if the provost marshal general did not submit a report on time? What would happen to them?

Ultimately the military justice system is a system that I believe is crucially needed within the military. It ensures service discipline. However, obviously we need to make sure the victims are taken care of. The decision has been made; this has gone forward, and we are moving to civilian courts to prosecute any sexual misconduct. Our military justice system, I fully agree, needs to be improved; however, my only concern is, let us not fix the one problem while creating one or two others.

I am optimistic that all parties can work together to come up with a way to make sure that the bill is the best bill possible to ensure that everyone in the Canadian Armed Forces, men and women who serve this nation, are properly protected.

● (1315)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the way the member finished his speech and the comments he shared. I also want to thank him for his service. It is important that we give regard and respect to our men and women in uniform.

Hearing the comments provided to me, and I would say to the constituents in the riding of Waterloo, about some assurance that we can actually move the bill to committee rather quickly, I would like to hear from the member how quickly he believes it could progress so we could get to scrutinizing it and making sure we get it right at committee.

**Alex Ruff:** Mr. Speaker, I really do not have a clue. Ultimately, I am sure the member's party follows a similar process that we do. The bill has just been tabled. We will discuss it as a caucus.

*Government Orders*

I know that one of the key jobs of our shadow minister for defence is to determine who wants to speak to the bill. The unique challenge, after a federal election, is that almost 50% of the MPs are brand new in the House. I am a big believer, and I have stood up for this and stated it before, that everybody should be entitled to speak as much as the parliamentary secretary to the House leader speaks in the chamber.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech, which was somewhat nuanced. However, considering that it was the Conservatives who appointed Mr. Vance in the first place when there were already allegations of sexual misconduct, and considering that the Liberals did everything they could to ignore those allegations, it is clear that the system needs to be overhauled. The idea behind the recommendations that were made and that are being implemented in the bill is to take the process out of the military's hands and put it in the hands of officials appointed by the Minister of National Defence. However, as we have seen in various cases, the minister does not seem to want to take action and prefers to avoid conflict.

I wonder if my colleague could share his suggestions. Should this be removed from political control? What would be the best mechanism to ensure fair judgments and a fair process in cases of sexual misconduct complaints?

[*English*]

**Alex Ruff:** Mr. Speaker, that is one of the good things in the bill: It makes reference to certain allegations and complaints having to be dealt with by the minister of national defence.

As for the case the member brought up about the appointment, I cannot speak to that. I was serving in uniform in 2015, when the former chief of the defence staff was appointed, so I cannot speak to what was and what was not known or anything like that.

I do know, and I spoke to this a couple of Parliaments ago, that when allegations of misconduct against the chief of the defence staff were brought forward to the Liberal minister, he chose not to do anything about it, and we ended up censuring him in Parliament. I have a lot of respect for him because of his time in uniform, his three tours in Afghanistan and his time as a police officer, but I have no time for, and this is partly why we are in this problem in the first place, the failure of leadership within the Canadian Armed Forces to stamp out sexual misconduct internally and, in some cases, a failure with respect to ministerial accountability.

**Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that was one of the best speeches I have ever heard the member make. It had a lot of meaning, and it has meaning for the people who live on the base in my riding and work in the Canadian Armed Forces.

In the member's speech, he alluded to a time when there were several high-ranking members all charged at the same time with allegations of sexual misconduct. This came at a particular point in time when it could have been very damaging to us had we been involved in a conflict, because it was in essence decapitating our military to a large extent. The member made an inference that there

was a sense at the time with some of the conduct allegations that there was political motivation to get them out of the way.

What is in the legislation that might set the member's mind at ease or might alert him to the fact that this could happen again?

**Alex Ruff:** Mr. Speaker, that is a tough question for me to answer. Again, I do not profess to know every paragraph or clause of the legislation yet.

Political interference is something we all have to watch out for at all times. I think that in this case, our leadership needs to be reviewed, but at the same time, we cannot make decisions hastily on false accusations either. Whether the bill would fully solve that or not, I am not sure, but ultimately it is something we should all be cautious of.

[*Translation*]

**Tatiana Auguste (Terrebonne, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sudbury.

We are here today to debate an important bill: Bill C-11, the military justice system modernization act. This bill addresses the long-standing concerns raised by victims and survivors in the Canadian Armed Forces and veteran community. This bill is a crucial step in responding to sexual trauma in the military.

As a government and as elected members, we have a duty to ensure that veterans and those currently serving in the Canadian Armed Forces receive the support and justice they deserve. Bill C-11 marks a turning point in this journey.

No one can fully understand the relevance of Bill C-11 without grasping the scope of military sexual trauma and its repercussions. Military sexual trauma, also known as MST, is a serious problem that affects a large number of veterans. It encompasses experiences of sexual harassment, assault and other forms of sexual violence that occur during military service. This type of trauma can have lasting and devastating effects on the lives of those who experience it, as it can impact their mental health, emotional well-being, personal relationships and overall quality of life. The effects of this type of trauma extend beyond the individual and are felt in families, personal relationships and communities.

It is a systemic problem that affects many people who have dedicated their lives to serving our country. The Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre provides support services for current members of the CAF, as well as for veterans. However, it can be difficult for victims to seek help and request the services they need.

Bill C-11 is an historic piece of legislation that recognizes and responds to the unique needs of survivors of military sexual trauma. For too long, MST survivors have faced insurmountable barriers to obtaining justice and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. Bill C-11 introduces measures that enhance transparency and accountability within the military justice system. This bill implements recommendations made by former justices Fish and Arbour to strengthen the military justice system. It provides a mechanism that will allow survivors to file complaints in a way that respects their dignity and ensures that their voices are heard.

This bill establishes a clear framework for investigating and responding to allegations of sexual misconduct while also promoting an environment of accountability and justice. In doing so, it not only supports survivors in their quest for justice, but also sends a strong message that this kind of behaviour will not be tolerated in the Canadian Armed Forces. Through this legislation, we are proposing transformative measures to transfer the investigation and prosecution of sexual offences alleged to have been committed in Canada by members of the Canadian Armed Forces to the civilian system.

Another pivotal element of Bill C-11 is its emphasis on culture change within the military and veteran communities. Addressing MST effectively requires a shift in attitudes and behaviours at all levels of the military establishment. Ultimately, this legislation will help us create a safer, more inclusive and more respectful workplace where CAF members can thrive.

As I mentioned earlier, this bill will also have a significant impact on veterans. The trauma resulting from these experiences can often lead to a range of challenges, such as PTSD, depression, anxiety and other mental health issues. These challenges often arise years after their service has ended.

It is therefore the responsibility of Veterans Affairs Canada to support veterans. This department will continue to play a crucial role in supporting individuals who have experienced sexual violence in the military, by ensuring that they have access to the resources they need to recover from their trauma and by advocating for their needs. Veterans Affairs Canada places the highest priority on ensuring that veterans and their families have access to the services they need when and where they need them.

That is why the department offers a whole host of programs and supports for individuals who become ill or injured in the line of duty, including victims of military sexual trauma. Veterans Affairs Canada ensures access to specialized services and to the supports needed to appropriately address impacts on their personal health and well-being. We are committed to meeting their needs.

• (1325)

The collaboration between the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada will help ensure the well-being of those who serve and have served our country in uniform.

I would like to acknowledge the government's determination to implement this important bill, which will change the lives of many members of the armed forces, as well as veterans. There was an urgent need to undertake this reform of the military justice system

### *Government Orders*

and put in place the legislative changes needed to effectively address the issue of MST.

This government's commitment to improving the military justice system, strengthening support for survivors and fostering a culture of respect and accountability remains unwavering. It is a collective responsibility that requires the co-operation, understanding and action of all stakeholders concerned.

Our government recognizes the unique needs of the women and men who have experienced sexual trauma while serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. That is why we are taking action by introducing this essential bill. I hope that all of my colleagues in the House will support this bill, which is important for our country's military community and veterans.

In closing, I want to reaffirm our commitment to those who have served our nation. MST is a serious problem, but by passing Bill C-11, we will take an essential step toward tackling it with the seriousness it deserves.

I want to thank all the members of the Canadian Armed Forces and the veterans who have served our country and sacrificed so much to protect Canada, our democracy and our values. It is our turn to support them, and Bill C-11 is part of our crucial measures for improving the culture in the Canadian Armed Forces.

• (1330)

[*English*]

**James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her intervention. She had over two minutes left. She needs to talk to her staff or to the minister's staff, whoever wrote her speech for her. They could have filled it in a bit more.

I wonder if the member wants to comment on the concerns we have on our side with the soft-on-crime policies the Liberals have brought forward, which are permeating our civilian courts. They are putting everybody out on bail with the lowest conditions possible. We also see that perpetrators of sexual assault, sexual interference and sexual exploitation get to serve their time under house arrest. Those who commit those crimes within the military would have access to the civilian largesse that is coming from the government. I would ask the member if she agrees that civilian penalties should be applied to military members.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

**Tatiana Auguste:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his concern about the length of my speeches, but it is unnecessary.

The civilian police already has the necessary jurisdiction in these matters. Once this legislation is passed, they will have exclusive jurisdiction over this information. We expect all police forces in Canada to act within their jurisdiction and enforce the law.

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we saw that the Liberal defence minister turned a blind eye to all the allegations against Mr. Vance. He pretended he had not received them.

My colleague spoke about the need to take action. I think it is good to ensure that the process is no longer exclusively in the hands of the military. However, the Minister of Defence will be the one appointing the judges.

Should this not be expanded so that the process does not depend solely on politics? That is one way to ensure that it is truly objective and fair.

**Tatiana Auguste:** Mr. Speaker, with regard to this suggestion, I invite my colleague to vote in favour of Bill C-11 and then make the necessary changes in committee.

*[English]*

**Sima Acan (Oakville West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that my hon. colleague left us two minutes more to ask questions and that she did not repeat the same points that have been said in the House.

I have a quick question for her. How many of Madam Arbour's 48 recommendations have been implemented, and when should we expect all of them to be implemented?

*[Translation]*

**Tatiana Auguste:** Mr. Speaker, of Madam Arbour's 48 recommendations, 34 have been implemented. The aim is to have all of them implemented by the end of the year.

I would like to mention that Bill C-11 is the response to recommendation 5, which will truly enable all of these measures and recommendations to be implemented.

• (1335)

*[English]*

**Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I welcome the new member to the House of Commons.

We have heard from survivors that the government does not consider the transfer of cases to the civilian justice system enough. Many have argued that if, for example, a victim is from Alberta, an accused lives in British Columbia and witnesses to an assault are from Quebec, local police units are not adequately resourced or equipped to handle the case.

Do the Liberals agree that dedicated time at committee will be needed to investigate models for civilian police to ensure a national standard for all victims?

*[Translation]*

**Tatiana Auguste:** Mr. Speaker, yes, I really hope that this bill will pass at second reading in the House so that a committee can study it and examine all our needs.

*[English]*

**Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in support of Bill C-11, the military justice system modernization act.

*[Translation]*

As a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence, I know how important this bill is to the military community and to veterans.

*[English]*

I would like to spend some time today talking specifically about the importance of creating lasting and meaningful cultural change in the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as our efforts toward the modernization of the military justice system.

All members of the House know the outstanding work that our Canadian Armed Forces carry out on behalf of Canadians both here and abroad. Our forces deploy all over the world, responding to regional crises, participating in international exercises and so much more. Our forces also deploy here at home to support Canadians, as we have seen in some specific incidents.

As the Minister of National Defence and many of my colleagues have already mentioned, it is our job to support our brave men and women in uniform. They carry out crucial work to keep Canadians safe, and it is our responsibility to create a professional and safe work environment for them so they can strive to reach their fullest potential. This is what Bill C-11 is all about. Bill C-11 proposes to reform the military justice system to ensure it is more transparent so that it can respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of our members.

Over the past few years, National Defence has received various external reports and reviews. These include the independent external comprehensive review and third independent review of the National Defence Act, which were overseen by former Supreme Court justices Louise Arbour and Morris Fish, respectively. These reports speak to the need to reform and modernize the Canadian Armed Forces to ensure that misconduct in any and all forms is a thing of the past. This is about restoring trust in our institutions and proving to our members that when they come forward with any concerns regarding misconduct in the workplace, these concerns will be taken seriously.

*Government Orders*

Before delving in to the broader cultural change efforts being undertaken at National Defence and in the Canadian Armed Forces, I would like to lay out the changes that are proposed in the bill in question. The proposed amendments to the National Defence Act seek to, first, modify the process for the appointment of the Canadian Forces provost marshal, the director of military prosecutions and the director of defence counsel services; second, expand the class of persons who are eligible to be appointed as a military judge to include non-commissioned members; third, affirm the judge advocate general's respect for the independence of authorities in the military justice system while exercising its superintendence of the administration of military justice; fourth, expand the class of persons who may make an interference complaint and provide that a member of the military police or person performing policing duties or functions under the Canadian Forces provost marshal's supervision must make such a complaint in certain circumstances; and fifth, change the title of the Canadian Forces provost marshal to the provost marshal general to align with the titles of other senior designations in the Canadian Armed Forces, such as the surgeon general, the chaplain general and the judge advocate general.

[*Translation*]

The amendments proposed in this bill aim to reform the military justice system by making it more transparent and responsive to the needs of Canadians. However, these crucial institutional changes are only one aspect of our efforts.

National Defence is grappling with the difficult realities and experiences of our military and civilian members, including some who have been the targets of wrongdoing, harassment and crimes of a sexual nature. The Minister of National Defence has therefore started taking important steps to prevent this problem and find possible solutions.

• (1340)

[*English*]

One of the principal examples of our efforts is the creation of the sexual misconduct support and resource centre. This centre is a major step forward in providing supports to our members. The centre and its resources are available to current and former defence team members, cadets, junior Canadian Rangers aged 16 and older, and family members of the defence community. This means we are able to provide real support to all those who are affected.

We also doubled down on our efforts with the creation of the chief professional conduct and culture in 2021.

[*Translation*]

That individual is responsible for developing policies and programs to address systemic misconduct, improving tracking mechanisms for reports of professional misconduct, and leading efforts to develop a professional conduct and culture framework that tackles all types of discrimination, harmful behaviour, biases and systemic barriers.

The steps we are taking to respond to Justice Arbour's 48 recommendations and those from the other reports will ensure that future generations of the Canadian Armed Forces have access to more resources and a healthy and respectful work environment. However,

we know there is a lot more work to do. Bill C-11 is just the first step.

I would now like to discuss the measures that National Defence is taking.

[*English*]

To provide context and set the scene, we should start with Justice Arbour's report, "The Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review", also known as the Arbour report. In April 2021, Justice Arbour launched a comprehensive review with the aim of examining harassment and sexual misconduct in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. This was a comprehensive review that spanned over 12 months. Justice Arbour carefully reviewed all policies, procedures, programs, practices and culture in National Defence and the military justice system. The final report included 48 recommendations, 17 of which could be immediately acted on. The previous minister of national defence accepted all 48 recommendations on May 30, 2022.

I would like to highlight two key recommendations that Justice Arbour made and share the progress we have made on them thus far.

Recommendation 11 relates to the repeal of the duty to report regulations. In the findings, Justice Arbour concluded that these regulations took away the agency and control of survivors in the reporting process, which would potentially lead to the revictimization of these individuals. The repeal of the duty to report came into effect on June 30, 2024, and we continue to work with the leadership to ensure we are prioritizing trust and safety in our reporting as well as the agency and choices of victims, survivors and affected persons.

Recommendation 48 calls for the Minister of National Defence to appoint an external monitor to oversee the implementation efforts of the IECR's recommendations. We took swift action on this important measure. The minister at the time appointed Madame Jocelyne Therrien as external monitor. Madame Therrien provides monthly progress reports to the Minister of National Defence on the implementation of the report's recommendations.

It is clear that our government has been working diligently to make real, tangible progress on the recommendations in front of us, but we know that there is more to do. At its core, this legislation is about protecting, supporting and empowering our people. We know that members of the forces and their families have our backs, and it is our responsibility to have theirs. As a supporter of our Canadian Armed Forces, I am proud to see the investments our government is making in the defence of our people, both through new financial commitments and our commitments to lasting cultural change.

*Government Orders*

Let me be very clear. The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces maintain an unwavering commitment to implementing the recommendations of former Supreme Court justices Arbour and Fish. Bill C-11 proposes to help us implement some of the recommendations from former justices Arbour and Fish to ensure that members of our forces have a safe and professional work environment to carry out the difficult tasks ahead of them.

• (1345)

**Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns I have heard from members of the CAF is that, currently, regarding cases going before military justice courts, their legal fees are covered. They are worried about frivolous litigation and that, if they are in criminal courts, they will have to pay for their own lawyers.

Has the government given any thought to what it would do as a remedy for that?

**Viviane Lapointe:** Mr. Speaker, in the work that has been done on this report, and with the multiple consultations that have been undertaken in the formulation of the report and all the recommendations, those concerns have been incorporated and are being looked at. They form part of the monthly progress reports that are provided to the Minister of National Defence. The discussions around those continue.

[*Translation*]

**Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Sudbury for her thoughtful speech. She is clearly a woman of action.

The problem we have with her government in the current context is that it is doing the exact opposite. It has failed to take action on behalf of victims, who are mostly women. In this context, will she commit to putting pressure on her party to speed up the passage of this bill and, more importantly, to speed up assistance for victims?

Victims are often left to fend for themselves, especially when they live in more remote regions, like ours. What resources can we offer to victims in the regions to ensure that they can heal and get justice with dignity?

**Viviane Lapointe:** Mr. Speaker, I agree that it is very important to take action. The government is taking much-needed steps at this very moment with this legislation. This bill really has two objectives: to propose a series of targeted changes to modernize the justice system and to strengthen support for victims and survivors. Focusing on those two things is very important.

**Hon. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I also want to thank Madam Arbour for her report, of which approximately 20 recommendations have already been implemented. The face of the Canadian Armed Forces has changed over the decades. Obviously, more women are joining today and that is a good thing.

Does my colleague believe that Bill C-11 must also be accompanied by a cultural change within the armed forces, so that women

are better supported, better heard, and their needs are properly addressed?

**Viviane Lapointe:** Mr. Speaker, yes, it is very important that this bill help create a more inclusive, respectful and safe working environment in which members of the Canadian Armed Forces can thrive. Our focus is on that cultural change. We are passionately moving in that direction.

[*English*]

**Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, having served in an environment where chain of custody and evidence integrity are critical, I am concerned about jurisdictional overlap.

I would like to have the member tell us how the military and civilian police would coordinate investigations without creating gaps where cases could fall through the cracks.

**Viviane Lapointe:** Mr. Speaker, part of the consultations that I referred to earlier, regarding the development of this, looked at all of the jurisdictions that exist among the various parties involved in this. This certainly formed part of the report and the recommendations.

Certainly, the military and civilian judicial processes are both equipped and ready to work together in bringing justice for these victims and their families.

• (1350)

**Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-11, the military justice system modernization act.

Let me say right from the start that I support the intentions behind this bill. It aims to make our military justice system fairer, protect victims better and increase accountability. These are important goals. I think all of us in the House, especially on the Conservative side, agree that justice and fairness must be part of everything we do, including how we run our armed forces.

That said, we also have a duty to ask tough questions to make sure that while we are fixing one problem we are not creating new ones somewhere else. I want to raise a few concerns. They are not political attacks but honest concerns about how this will work in the real world with real consequences for the men and women in uniform.

One of the biggest changes in this bill is that sexual offences that occur in Canada would now be handled by civilian courts instead of the military. On paper, that makes sense. We want victims to feel safe coming forward, and civilian courts have experience handling these cases. This could lead to better outcomes for victims.

*Government Orders*

However, here is a question: What happens when something like this happens overseas during a deployment or mission? Our military operates around the world in peacekeeping, training missions and sometimes in combat zones. In many of those places, civilian police and courts are unavailable.

If the military does not have jurisdiction over certain offences, who would handle those cases when they happen abroad? The bill implies that jurisdiction overseas would revert to the National Defence Act and be handled under the code of service discipline. In other words, it would be handled by the military. If military justice is not suitable in Canada, how is it suitable overseas? Would victims feel that justice has been served by a system not deemed good enough at home? This needs to be addressed.

The second thing is command authority. Military discipline is different from civilian life. The military justice system exists to maintain order, morale and operational effectiveness. It gives commanders the tools to act quickly and firmly. This bill would risk taking too much control away from commanders. If issues have to go through a long civilian process with no clear chain of responsibility, our ability to act fast in critical situations is compromised. Commanders should not have unchecked power, but they must be involved, especially during active missions. Let us not weaken their ability to lead and protect their troops.

The third thing is independence versus bureaucracy. This bill would give more independence to roles like provost marshal and director of military prosecutions. In theory, that supports fairness and impartiality. However, we must be careful not to create a system so wrapped up in bureaucracy that it becomes slow or even politicized. Our soldiers deserve a justice system that is efficient, focused and responsive, not one bogged down in red tape.

The fourth thing is communication between systems. Let me give members a real-life example I was told about recently. At a military camp last year, a serious incident of a sexual nature occurred. It was reported by the military to civilian authorities right away and the RCMP took over the case, which is exactly as this bill envisions. However, once the RCMP had the file, there was no communication back to the military. As a result of not knowing what restrictions were to be sent down the chain of command, the military sent both the victim and the accused home on the same bus. That should never happen. That is not a failure of values. It is a failure of process.

Nowhere in this bill is there a formal mechanism for communication between the RCMP and the military. Without one, this kind of situation could happen again and again. If we are going to transfer cases to civilian courts, there must be clear communication every step of the way. The military still has to manage the members involved as long as they are active service members and protect both the rights of the accused and the safety of others.

Finally, this cannot be “set it and forget it”. We need to keep watching this bill as it rolls out. That means oversight, regular reviews and honest discussions about what is working and what is not. Because we overcivilianize the military justice system, we forget that it serves a unique and high-pressure environment, and we risk weakening it. If we weaken military justice, we weaken our ability to maintain order, protect victims and defend this country.

• (1355)

I will say in closing that I support the goals of Bill C-11. I support protecting victims. I support making justice fair and seen to be fair. However, we must think carefully about the real-world impacts of these changes. What happens when offences occur overseas? What happens when communication breaks down? What happens if the military loses the ability to act quickly when it matters most?

These are not hypotheticals; these are real questions that affect the lives of our armed forces members and their families. Let us pass the bill, but let us do it with our eyes open. Let us strengthen military justice, not slow it down. Let us protect victims and protect discipline. We can do both, and we must.

**Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in the point my colleague was making about what would happen when these incidents happen internationally. I was chair of the status of women committee when we studied sexual assault in the military, and it was clear that the existing military system is subject to the old boys' club. If someone is in a foreign location, they are forced to work with the perpetrators, and that system was not working. I think it needs a better answer.

Can the member comment?

**Scott Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I can comment only on what exists in the bill. The bill does not have any provision whatsoever to revert to civilian justice overseas. Obviously, it is outside the jurisdiction. The flip side of that question is this: If the military is dealing with only those problems outside Canada, how is it going to maintain its expertise in doing so on the civilian side? That is the flip side of the same problem. There is no provision whatsoever in the bill for civilians, and I would like to see that provision.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member actually following the lead of my colleague from Terrebonne in not using the entire amount of allotted time that he had to speak. We know there are many members who want to speak to the bill, but we also recognize that there is some agreement that the bill needs to go to committee so that we can get it right, so that we would be serving the very people who take so much time to serve us.

*Statements by Members*

First, I appreciate that the member was very concise in providing some constructive feedback. I would like to hear from the member on whether he agrees that the work to advance the bill and to make any amendments to it should be done at committee and that we should do it in a timely manner so that we can actually get to all the recommendations by Madam Arbour.

**Scott Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I personally believe that a flawed bill should be fixed before it goes to committee if possible. This is a flaw in the bill, and it should be addressed. I am not entirely sure how. There is some low-hanging fruit here, like the interpolice communications, that I think can be done very easily. It simply needs a provision in the bill.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is really important to recognize that in the report we are talking about, there are 48 recommendations, and the government is on track to get 47 of those 48 passed by the end of the year. The wild card is actually Bill C-11. All political entities in the House seem to support the essence of that legislation. Much of that legislation, such as the transfer over to the civil justice system, is already being incorporated in an informal way through the Canadian Armed Forces. We are all waiting to see the legislation get to the committee stage.

Would the member not agree, out of respect for the Canadian Forces and the women and men who serve this country so well, that we should try to get this thing passed before the end of the year?

**Scott Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I would certainly like to have seen the last 10 years be more productive, but, unfortunately, they were not. I do not think we should be passing flawed bills at all, especially when there are gaping holes that can easily be fixed.

I served for 10 years; I do not need lessons on how to respect the Canadian Forces.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

### POLICE AND PEACE OFFICERS' NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY

**Maggie Chi (Don Valley North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day, which falls on the last Sunday of September.

Over 900 brave officers have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their communities, and we commemorate those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. We honour their sacrifice and their families by building a safer Canada.

I am thankful to be able to advise the House that no police or peace officer was killed in the line of duty in 2024. Our profound hope is that we may say the same every year, yet every day, brave officers stand ready to face danger to keep us safe.

Throughout the summer, I had the pleasure of meeting the fine officers of Toronto Police Service 33 Division in my riding of Don

Valley North. I commend their professionalism, compassion and commitment.

We owe police and peace officers an enduring debt of gratitude, and I thank them for their dedication to keeping our communities safe.

\* \* \*

### IMMIGRATION

**Michael Ma (Markham—Unionville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals broke our immigration system.

We have legitimately vulnerable persons from Hong Kong, Ukraine and Sudan who have been left in limbo on their path to permanent residency, despite already being in Canada. I have personally met with over 500 people in the Hong Kong pathways program across Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver. They are all positively contributing to Canada. They are paying taxes, and they are integrating into our society.

Canada's asylum system was set up to protect truly vulnerable persons, but it is being abused through the chaotic Liberal immigration system.

Conservatives call for the Liberal government to fix the broken immigration system to help the many people who are being left behind.

\* \* \*

### CHAMPIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARDS

**Hon. Mike Lake (Leduc—Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, or CAMIMH, and to highlight the importance of Mental Illness Awareness Week, which is taking place October 5 to October 11.

CAMIMH has spent the last 25 years ensuring mental health and substance use health remain national priorities, advocating for awareness, reducing stigma and demanding life-changing care.

Later this evening in Ottawa, CAMIMH will announce the 2025 Champions of Mental Health Awards, celebrating seven remarkable individuals and organizations making a lasting difference in communities across our country through their efforts.

I want to extend my warmest congratulations to this year's honourees for their leadership and commitment to advancing mental health and substance use health. Each of these recipients is proof that change is possible when compassion is matched with concrete action.

Together, let us continue striving for a Canada that understands and supports mental health and substance use health with the same urgency as physical health, a Canada that meets our awesome potential for everyone.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL SUPPLIES IN ALFRED-PELLAN**

**Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for the fourth year in a row, I had the privilege of leading the distribution of new school bags filled with school supplies to families in Alfred-Pellan who might be having a hard time in this back-to-school period.

This year, we handed out over 130 bags thanks to the generosity of our constituents and the essential support of the Centre d'enrichissement sportif et académique de Montréal, the Saint-François-de-Sales parish and the Centre communautaire Petit Espoir. I thank them so much. Seeing the smiles on the children's faces as I hand them the bags reminds me of how much of an impact a simple gesture can have.

Back to school is an important time for our young people. This gesture gives many families a fair and motivating start. I am proud to represent such a committed and supportive community.

\* \* \*

[English]

**ANTI-SEMITISM**

**Mike Dawson (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, across Canada tomorrow, rallies are being planned to celebrate the martyrs of Hamas. Let us be honest about who they are celebrating. They are not martyrs; they are monsters. They raped, tortured and murdered nearly 1,200 innocent Jews on October 7, 2023, and now their supporters plan to dance in our streets.

This is not free speech; it is hate speech meant to intimidate. This is not protest; it is glorifying terror.

Eighty years ago, the world said “never again”. The Nuremberg laws showed us that hate begins where it ends. When people cheer for those who slaughter Jews, history is repeating itself in real time.

If Canada cannot call evil by its name, then we have lost more than our moral compass: We have lost our soul.

I will not stay silent. I say shame on the Liberal government; shame.

\* \* \*

• (1405)

**MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL**

**Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker,

[Member spoke in Mandarin]

[English]

Today, millions celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival. Not only is it an important celebration in Chinese culture, but similar celebrations are also held in Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese and other Asian communities.

Like many traditional harvest festivals, it coincides with the full moon, and the focus is on family, food and prosperity. It is also known as the Mooncake Festival, with cakes that feature an egg

yolk in the middle to signify the moon, which represents unity, harmony and prosperity.

The origin story of moon goddess Chang'e and her earth-bound husband Hou Yi is all about reunion. Moved by true love, the mother of the moon allows the couple to be reunited each year on the full moon of the eighth lunar month. This has now become a time of reunion around the world, particularly for families.

Happy Mid-Autumn Festival.

[Member spoke in Mandarin]

[English]

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Dalwinder Gill (Calgary McKnight, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in April, the Prime Minister promised bail reform to keep repeat violent criminals off our streets, but half a year later, he has broken his promise and kept soft-on-crime Liberal catch-and-release laws in place. It is because of Liberal bail that gun crime across Canada is up 130%, hate crime is up 258%, homicide is up nearly 30% and extortion is up 357%.

Today, Conservatives are proposing a fast-track solution to pass our jail not bail bill right away to keep Canadians safe.

Will the Liberals scrap Liberal bail or get out of the way so that Conservatives can do it?

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**KIM CLAVEL**

**Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebecers can feel even prouder today because Kim Clavel is once again the world boxing champion.

She told us that she would be stepping into the ring as a proud Quebecker and promised that she would once again become world champion. That is exactly what she did with a brilliant performance on September 28, defeating her Argentinian opponent by unanimous decision in a hard-fought battle.

By winning the International Boxing Federation's strawweight title, Kim Clavel became the first Quebec woman to be champion in two weight classes. She did this despite facing adversity and challenges. What a great example to set for all young Quebeckers, especially young Quebec women.

Our champion from Saint-Calixte now has her sights set on the World Boxing Council belt, but let us hope her rival has the courage to face her.

*Statements by Members*

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to congratulate Kim Clavel, our very own world champion.

\* \* \*

**MAGDELEINE VALLIÈRES-MILL**

**Hon. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate women's history, I want to call attention to the outstanding achievement of a young woman from Sherbrooke who made history on September 27.

At the tender age of 24, Magdeleine Vallières-Mill, made it the top of the podium, winning gold in the road world championships in Rwanda. After racing over 160 kilometres and making a decisive push at the end, she crossed the finish line with a solid lead.

Never before has Canada won this title, that is, until Magdeleine came along. The young champion from Sherbrooke is living a dream right now and taking us along for the ride. Her victory has left her team, Sherbrooke and the entire country bursting with pride, with a story to tell and re-tell for years to come.

Canada will be hosting the world road championships next September, and our celebrated Sherbrooke champion will be on hand to defend her title, with the whole country there to cheer her on. Congratulations Magdeleine, and happy Women's History Month to everyone.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA**

**Scot Davidson (New Tecumseth—Gwillimbury, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Blue Jays continue to annihilate the New York Yankees, but it is a swing and a miss every time the Prime Minister goes up against the Americans.

U.S. tariffs on Canada have doubled since the Prime Minister took office, and Canada now faces the highest unemployment rate in the G7. While the Blue Jays are hitting home runs, the Prime Minister keeps coming home with nothing. He has already blown past his own deadlines to secure a deal with the U.S., and the tariffs have only gotten worse. Businesses across the country and those in my community, like MiTek, Oetiker, Borden Metal Products and Honda, are paying the price for the Liberals' elbows-down approach.

With investment fleeing and unemployment rising, Canadians cannot afford another round of failed negotiations and a wasted trip abroad from the Prime Minister. It is time for him to stop striking out and finally deliver a win for Canada.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**IONE CHRISTENSEN**

**Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when former senator Ione Christensen departed this world on September 15, the Yukon lost one of its best-loved leaders. A fourth-generation Yukoner, Ione's accomplishments are legion: first woman mayor of Whitehorse, first female commissioner of the Yukon and the first Yukon woman appointed to the Senate.

Beyond her political life, Ione loved the Yukon outdoors, rafting and hiking the waterways and trails of the territory, including the historic Chilkoot Trail, which she hiked over 20 times in the footsteps of her great-grandfather's first entry to the Yukon in 1897. That same great-grandfather carried over the Chilkoot Pass a small sack of sourdough passed on through generations and nurtured religiously by Ione through many a family Sunday pancake breakfast. The sourdough also thrives in the households of hundreds of grateful Yukoners. Just this weekend, I baked a couple of loaves in which I can truly say the spirit of Ione lives on.

Before her passing, I asked Ione for advice for our leaders. "Hang in there", she whispered. We owe Ione no less an honour than to hang in there and stand up for Canada.

\* \* \*

**NORTHPINE FOUNDATION**

**Alana Hirtle (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Sara Tessier of The Northpine Foundation. Sara's journey is one of remarkable courage and resilience. As a survivor who has faced immense personal challenges, she has not only persevered but has also transformed her lived experience into leadership. Sara is now a tireless champion for formerly incarcerated people: those who too often face stigma, systemic barriers and a lack of opportunity upon release.

Through her advocacy and her work at The Northpine Foundation, she is helping to break down those barriers, offering hope and opening doors to meaningful second chances. Her story reminds us that recovery and redemption are possible, and that with support and opportunity, people can rebuild their life and contribute greatly to our communities.

Sara Tessier is a fighter, a leader and an inspiration to us all.

\* \* \*

**BAILEY MCCOURT**

**Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the tragic story of Bailey McCourt, who was murdered by her ex-partner in Kelowna, has been shared many times before in the House. Today I want to share a different perspective, from Christopher Anderson, the bystander who was just walking by and rushed to try to save her. He wrote to me, and with his permission, I share his words: "I ran towards them, but by the time I reached them, he was already hitting her in the head—over and over. I held her hand and told her she was safe and loved. I'm not writing to ask for anything specific. I just need you to know what happened. And I need others to know Bailey's name. She was a mother, a daughter, and a human being who deserved to live. People are dying in plain view. I don't believe we can afford to keep ignoring it."

Violent crime has countless victims: the people whose lives were taken, the bystanders, the first responders, communities and the families who must carry on.

I urge all members to remember Bailey, hear Christopher's plea, put politics aside and vote to fast-track the jail not bail act today.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### JANETTE BERTRAND

**Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to mark Women's History Month, I would like to pay tribute to a great Quebecker, Janette Bertrand.

As an author, journalist, playwright and communicator, for decades, she has brought women's words to the forefront on our screens and in our collective conversations. Her work has bravely discussed topics that had remained taboo for too long, such as equality in the workplace, domestic violence, stereotypes, consent, mental health, aging and dignity.

By giving a face, a voice and a human dimension to lived experiences, she has helped break taboos and advance equality in Quebec and Canada. Her influence spans generations. She has inspired women creators, empowered families and raised awareness among public decision-makers. At 100 years of age, she continues to inspire, encourage reflection and pave the way for women to thrive.

My thanks go out to Ms. Bertrand.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

[English]

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is off to Washington today. Once again he is wheels up but elbows down. Remember when he promised to negotiate a win with Donald Trump by July 21? Well, since he took office, U.S. tariffs on Canada have doubled, thousands of jobs have been lost and Canada has the second-highest unemployment rate in the G7. Businesses in St. Thomas, Elgin and London are still seeing no end in sight to the trade uncertainty. If this is a win, I would hate to see a loss.

However, the Prime Minister is not the only one heading to the United States; so are investors. We have lost nearly \$54 billion in investment since he took office. Stellantis is pausing production in Ontario while investing \$10 billion in the United States. Enbridge is building pipelines in the U.S. while saying that Liberal anti-energy laws are making it impossible to do it here.

Every time the Prime Minister faces Trump, he backs down: no deals, no progress, just more pain for Canadian workers.

\* \* \*

#### PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS AWARENESS MONTH

**Hon. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month. The month encourages open dialogue to help break the silence surrounding a difficult

#### Oral Questions

experience faced by over 1,600 grieving families in Canada each year.

I am proud of my colleague from Burnaby North—Seymour for introducing Evan's law, a long-overdue measure to support grieving parents while on parental leave. Evan's law was inspired by the experience of a constituent of mine, whose personal grief can inspire lasting change.

When passed, Evan's law would amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code, ensuring that families would no longer experience additional trauma caused by having to notify Service Canada and file a new claim to continue receiving their benefits. This small change would mean that families would be able to focus on healing from their loss rather than navigating bureaucratic processes.

As we observe Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, let us create space for the voices of families who have experienced the heartbreaking loss of an infant.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### JUSTICE

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, criminals have been released onto our streets and chaos has been unleashed under Liberal laws.

In Saint-Jérôme, a woman was killed by her partner, a man who had been arrested 30 times before and had violated his release conditions 16 times. However, because of Liberal laws, he was released.

Today, we are voting on a Conservative motion to repeal these Liberal laws, put criminals in prison and restore safety for all Canadians. Will the Prime Minister allow it to pass?

[English]

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every Canadian deserves to be safe and to feel safe in their community.

Over the course of the recent federal election campaign, we made several commitments to help reform Canada's bail system and to advance stronger penalties for those who commit serious offences against their fellow Canadians.

*Oral Questions*

We are willing to work across the aisle with other members to ensure that we put forward reforms that are informed by evidence, not ones that are seemingly copied and pasted from American-style bail laws. It is going to be only a matter of weeks before we advance new legislation to strengthen criminal justice reforms in this country. I hope all members from all parties support us.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I met with the head of the Peel Regional Police union, along with a group of crime victims. Among them was the Farooqi family. Aleem Farooqi rose at night to protect his kids from a home invader and was shot in the throat. He is dead. His brother came out and said the Liberal government should be ashamed of itself for keeping in place Liberal bail that has allowed for 1,600 crimes every single day.

We have a motion before the House to get rid of Liberal bail and restore safety to our streets. Will the Prime Minister let it pass?

• (1420)

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, obviously when such violent circumstances arise in communities across the country, it is incumbent upon members of Parliament on both sides of the aisle to condemn them unreservedly.

I would remind my hon. colleague that some of the laws he points to in his many promises, including ones pertaining to self-defence, were in fact put into Canada's laws when the Conservatives last held power, while Stephen Harper was prime minister and the Leader of the Opposition was in his cabinet.

Moving forward, Conservatives, Liberals and others will see some of the strongest reforms being put in place when it comes to changing the bail system in this country and when it comes to adopting stiffer sentences for serious crimes.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised to negotiate a major victory with the Americans and have an agreement in place before July 21.

Tomorrow, he will announce the agreement that has been reached with the U.S. President. The Prime Minister's Office has told the media that all tariffs on aluminum and steel will be dropped.

Can the Prime Minister also confirm that the major victory he will announce tomorrow will include the elimination of tariffs on cars, lumber and all other Canadian products?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian Economy, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is right. At the invitation of the U.S. President, the Prime Minister will be going to Washington tomorrow to continue the important discussion on the trade relationship, how to protect jobs and industries in Canada and how to build an economy in North America that

is in the interests of both countries. Other international issues will also be discussed.

I would have been surprised if the Leader of the Opposition had not been pleased with these efforts with our U.S. partner.

[English]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised that he was going to negotiate a win with the president, that he would have a deal by July 21. Here we are in October, and tomorrow the Prime Minister is going to the White House to announce this deal. Surely he is not just going for a photo op and to make more excuses.

The Prime Minister's Office is already telling the media that there will be the full elimination of tariffs on steel and aluminum. Will the Prime Minister also confirm that this deal that he is announcing tomorrow, this win, will include the elimination of tariffs on autos and softwood lumber, and the elimination of buy America and all other protectionism against Canada?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian Economy, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I remember the Leader of the Opposition and some of his colleagues criticizing the government for not having enough direct, face-to-face engagement with the President of the United States.

Good news is that the president has invited the Prime Minister to a working meeting tomorrow in Washington, followed by a working lunch. Obviously the conversation will centre on trade issues and what we want to do to protect Canadian industries and Canadian workers, at the same time building an economy in North America that is in the interest of both countries. The discussion will also talk about a series of other international issues.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, surely after promising to negotiate a win, to have a deal by July 21, the Prime Minister is not flying all the way to Washington, D.C., just to have lunch. By the sounds of it, that is all the Liberals are going to accomplish. Since he promised this win, American tariffs on Canada have doubled.

The Prime Minister has caved on countertariffs, on the digital services tax and on everything else. As a result of his weakness, 86,000 Canadians have lost their jobs. Surely, the Prime Minister will finally keep his promise and come home with a win. What will it be?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian Economy, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is currently in the best position of any major trading ally of the United States, but we have said consistently that we have work to do with our American partners on sectoral tariffs. We have work to do in building an economy in North America that is in the interests of Canadian businesses and Canadian workers. That is exactly the conversation the Prime Minister will have with the president.

Was the Leader of the Opposition suggesting that, if the President of the United States invites us to go to Washington for a meeting and a working lunch, we should have just said no and hung up the phone?

• (1425)

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, no. We are suggesting that the Prime Minister actually keep his promise and negotiate a win.

The Liberals' excuses are tripping over each other. Last week, the Prime Minister said that the American tariffs on Canada are so bad that they are why we have the fastest-shrinking economy in the G7, the second-highest unemployment, \$52 billion of net investment that has fled and 86,000 jobs that have been lost. Now the Liberals are saying that we have the best possible position. Which is it?

Why is our economy so bad? Is it because of failed Liberal diplomacy on trade or bad economic management at home?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we never talk down our workers, we never talk down our industries, and we never talk down our economy.

Let me talk to the House about good news: 500 new jobs at Hitachi in Varennes, Quebec; 150 jobs at Alstom in Saint-Bruno-de-Montarville, Quebec; 400 new jobs in Kitimat at Cedar LNG; 500 new jobs at Ferrero in Brantford, Ontario, and who does not like Nutella; and 460 jobs at Stemcell Technologies in Burnaby.

We will continue to build Canada strong.

[*Translation*]

**Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we commend the Prime Minister on his visit to Washington. We asked for it. It was time. More importantly, however, it is time he kept his election promise to make some gains for Quebec's economy. So far, it has been nothing but one concession after another.

He capitulated on the digital services tax. He dropped the global minimum tax on the American tech giants. Talks are even being held to allow more U.S. milk into the country. Despite all these concessions, not only did Quebec get nothing out of the bargain, but Donald Trump has increased tariffs on our lumber.

When will we see some progress for Quebec?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian**

**Economy, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said in an answer a few moments ago, the Prime Minister will be travelling to Washington later today for a working session in the Oval Office at the invitation of the U.S. President.

Obviously, we intend to discuss the issues just raised by our Bloc Québécois colleague. We are deeply concerned about the tariffs on the softwood lumber industry. We discussed other sectors, like steel, aluminum and automobiles. These are exactly the kinds of discussions we are going to have with our American partners. We are going to keep doing whatever work it takes to get there.

**Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister announced that he was going to focus on discussions about steel. Steel is important, but Quebec's aluminum and forestry sectors are important too.

Not only is the Prime Minister not addressing these issues in his discussions, but the federal aid announced in August for the forestry industry is still not available. While he is in Washington, the Prime Minister needs to talk about aluminum and lumber. However, in the meantime, here in Ottawa, could he at least release the financial assistance he promised for Quebec's forestry industry?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will always be there for our various industries in Canada and in Quebec in particular.

We will be there for our workers, yes, in steel, but also in aluminum, softwood lumber and, of course, the auto sector. We will be there for all our workers. In fact, we have a number of funds available for industries in those sectors. We are also in talks with officials in those various sectors.

I would be pleased to work with my colleague, whom I hold in high regard, to come up with solutions on the softwood lumber issue.

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**TRANSPORTATION**

**Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there is a public danger on our roads because of the Driver Inc. scam. It mainly involves immigrant truck drivers in Ontario who are being exploited by companies to save costs and who are driving heavy trucks without the proper qualifications. This is causing fatal accidents. Vulnerable people are being abused, and truck drivers who follow the rules are facing illegal competition.

Ottawa must launch an investigation, tighten the screws on businesses, and prohibit temporary immigrants from incorporating. It is simple. There are 10 steps to take, but the federal government is looking the other way.

When will the government crack down on dangerous drivers?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government knows that truck drivers move our economy forward and deserve all the protections provided by the Canada Labour Code.

That is why we have created a specialized inspection team that has already conducted more than 100,000 inspections and awareness-raising activities in the sector. We will rigorously enforce the law by working with the Canada Revenue Agency and the provinces to combat misclassification and ensure that drivers receive the rights and benefits to which they are entitled.

\* \* \*

● (1430)

[English]

**CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS**

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for those of us keeping score at home, the Prime Minister is oh for three. He promised to negotiate a win with Trump by July 21. There is still no deal and tariffs are actually higher. He promised it would be elbows up, but then he quietly dropped countertariffs, and what did he get in return? He got nothing. He promised Canada would have the fastest-growing economy in the G7, instead it is the fastest shrinking. The 86,000 Canadians who have lost their jobs since he took office cannot afford to wait for the Prime Minister to get through this slump.

When the Prime Minister comes home from Washington this week, will he have a deal to eliminate all U.S. tariffs, or is that promise just stuff he said during the election?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know it is Monday, but I already have good news for the week.

Canadians understand that the world is changing. We need to adapt, and we have a generational opportunity to invest in Canada. This morning, we announced a new capital formation budgeting framework. In the new budget cycle, my colleagues will be happy because it is going to give them more clarity to see the budget expenditures. It is going to provide more predictability to provinces, territories and businesses and, best of all, it is going to allow more opportunities to align with the budget season. Let us build a—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, changing the date Canadians are told how bad inflation and deficits are going to be is not going to give comfort to anybody.

The Liberals have to get their stories straight. When they are asked about job losses here at home, they say they are all because of U.S. tariffs. When they are asked why the Prime Minister cannot get a win on those tariffs, they say that Canada already has the best deal and that those tariffs do not apply to most goods. Both of those excuses cannot be true at the same time.

Here is what is true: The deficit here has doubled; Canada has the second-highest unemployment in the G7; and 86,000 people have lost their jobs.

What is the reason? Is it the Prime Minister's failed trade diplomacy abroad or his failed economic policies at home?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian Economy, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we remember the Conservatives standing up in the House with manufactured indignation that the Prime Minister should be talking to the president every day and the Prime Minister should be in Washington, asking why has he not been in Washington.

The good news is that the Prime Minister and the president speak frequently. They are in touch on a whole series of international issues, the most important of which is, obviously, the Canadian economy, Canadian workers and Canadian jobs. That is why we are looking forward to discussing those exact issues in the Oval Office tomorrow with the president.

**Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is the day. As the Prime Minister heads to Washington, Canadians are watching closely. After a string of failures, including the doubling of tariffs on Canadian goods and repeated missed deadlines on his promises to negotiate a win for Canada, expectations could not be higher.

For months, the Prime Minister has talked a big game but has delivered nothing when it matters most. Will he finally keep his word, deliver a real win for Canada, and secure the removal of U.S. tariffs?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will always stand up for our workers and our industries. That is why, when it comes to the different sectors that are being tariffed, we are there to support them.

This morning, I was on the phone with the CEO of Dofasco, making sure that we are there for our steelworkers. We were also working with Algoma Steel over the weekend, and there is good news. Irving shipyard will now be buying steel from Algoma in Ontario.

This is what it is to build Canada strong.

*Oral Questions*

**Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government's message on the economy has been all over the place. On the one hand, it blames U.S. tariffs for Canadians' shrinking economy, while on the other, it boasts about the best trade deal with the U.S. The facts tell a different story. The deficit has doubled. Canada has the second-highest unemployment rate and the fastest-shrinking economy in the G7, with \$54 billion in investment having fled. There are also 86,000 people out of work.

Is this bleak reality the result of the Prime Minister's failed economic policies here at home, his failure to secure results abroad, or both?

• (1435)

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are focused on building a very strong bilateral relationship. I ask my colleague opposite if it is a failure when we support our auto industry, if it is a failure when we support steel, if it is a failure when we support aluminum.

We beg to differ. We are diversifying our trade routes. We are building strong bilateral relationships across the world, including with the United States.

On this side of the House, we will always fight for Canada.

[Translation]

Long live Canada.

\* \* \*

[English]

### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Jamil Jivani (Bowmanville—Oshawa North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, GM is eliminating thousands of jobs in Oshawa, and Stellantis has idled its Windsor plant while sending \$10 billion to the United States. Families across Ontario are rightly concerned that the Prime Minister has no plan for Canadian auto and no plan for impacted workers.

Will the Prime Minister bring home a deal for Canadian auto that eliminates U.S. tariffs?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been actively engaged with all the CEOs of the D3, that is Stellantis, GM and, of course, Ford, as well as with Honda and Toyota. We have put in place a remission system to make sure that they would be able to continue their operations and create jobs. We know that the auto sector is facing a challenge. That is why we are also engaging with Unifor and the different labour unions. At the same time, we now have a very important fund of \$5 billion to help these plans.

We will be there for our auto sector.

[Translation]

### CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

**Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the wait is over. Tomorrow will be a big day for the Liberal Prime Minister.

Tomorrow, the Prime Minister will finally keep his promise to “negotiate a win” for Canada. Tomorrow, tariffs on steel, aluminum, automobiles and softwood lumber will come down, because that is what the Prime Minister promised. The Prime Minister was encouraged to keep his promise to negotiate a win with the United States by July 21, but he broke that promise. His big strategy was to kowtow to the U.S. President, and the tariffs doubled.

Tomorrow, will the Prime Minister finally keep his promise to negotiate a win and eliminate all U.S. tariffs in Canada?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today is a great day. Canadians understand that the world has changed and that we need to adapt. We need to focus on capital investments.

That is why we introduced a new fiscal framework that focuses on capital investments and sets the record straight given the budget cycle. That is very good news. This will give my colleagues some clarity so they can review the measures in the budget. This will deliver more predictability for businesses, provinces and associations that depend on federal funding. This will create more opportunities for construction in this country.

I am sure that the Conservatives will celebrate the fact that we are going to build Canada strong.

**Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Liberal clarity on the economy.

On the one hand, the Liberals claim that the collapse of Canada's economy, the worst performing in the G7, is due to tariffs. On the other hand, they say they have reached an excellent agreement on tariffs.

What do the real numbers say? They say that the deficit has doubled, that Canada is the G7 economy with the sharpest contraction, that Canada ranks second to last in terms of unemployment, that the country has bled \$54 billion in net investment and that 86,000 people have lost their jobs.

Is the Prime Minister a bad diplomat, a bad economist for the country or just plain bad?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, listening to the Conservatives is disheartening. What they are not telling Canadians is that Canada is in an enviable position among the G7 countries. Canada has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio and the lowest deficit-to-GDP ratio. It is also one of only two G7 countries, the other being Germany, to have an AAA credit rating.

### Oral Questions

Instead of criticizing the Canadian economy, my colleague should be celebrating the fact that we are building together, that we are making generational investments and that we are building Canada strong. On this side of the House, we will fight for workers, fight for the economy and fight for Canada.

\* \* \*

• (1440)

### CANADA POST

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the postal crisis is getting worse, and it is entirely the federal government's fault. Canada Post presented its workers with a new collective agreement offer on Friday. That offer was worse than the previous one, which had been rejected.

Canada Post is taking advantage of the balance of power it has thanks to the federal government to intimidate its employees and try to force them to back down. The minister keeps saying that both sides need to negotiate, but by meddling in the conflict, he has poisoned the discussions.

Does he realize that it is his fault that no one is getting their mail today?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we see Canada Post as an essential and vital institution. It is part of the very fabric of our country. We must save it. It needs to be saved. Canada Post is losing \$10 million a day. Canadians have to pay \$10 million every day just to keep Canada Post in operation. Perhaps this is acceptable for the Bloc Québécois, but we do not think this is acceptable.

We want the institution to modernize and transform itself. I am confident that the union and Canada Post management will be able to come to an agreement to save this institution, which needs help.

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, before the Liberals got involved, mail was being delivered. Since they got involved, the postal service has ground to a halt. The regions, small businesses and the most vulnerable are paying the price. Before the Liberals got involved, Canada Post was presenting serious offers. Now, we have never been further from an agreement and we wonder how the parties are ever going to agree. We have the Liberal Party of Canada to thank for this fiasco.

Will the government acknowledge its full responsibility in the Canada Post crisis?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find that question to be absolutely staggering. For years in committee, members of the Bloc Québécois have been calling for Canada Post to modernize. The labour dispute she is referring to has been going on for 20 months. Employees at Canada Post went on a general strike before Christmas, 2024. To claim that the government's action to transform Canada Post caused the labour dispute is to live in an alternate universe.

That said, we are used to the Bloc Québécois living in an alternate universe where it is okay for Canada Post to lose \$10 million a day. We are not okay with that. It is important that we modernize

this institution. I trust the union and management to come to an agreement.

\* \* \*

[English]

### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised he would negotiate a win with President Trump and have a deal by July 21, but there has been no win and there is no deal. Major U.S. tariffs on Canada have doubled, and the Prime Minister has repeatedly conceded to Americans' demands. Now his office is telling media that all steel and aluminum tariffs may be lifted tomorrow, finally, but what about the auto sector? Thousands of jobs are at risk. GM is cutting. Stellantis has idled its Windsor plant and has made a \$10-billion investment in the U.S.

Will the Prime Minister's long-promised, long-overdue deal include an end to U.S. tariffs on Canadian autos, yes or no?

**Hon. Maninder Sidhu (Minister of International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians elected this government to protect, build and transform our economy. We are protecting and supporting our industries with a new \$5-billion strategic response fund and the \$1-billion tariff relief initiative, which will give thousands of Canadian businesses financial support to access new global markets. We are building Canada with new nation-building projects, which will lead to thousands of new careers in the skilled trades across Canada, and we are transforming our economy by unlocking new market opportunities so that Canadian businesses have preferential access to fast-growing regions around the world.

We are laser-focused on building Canada strong.

\* \* \*

### THE ECONOMY

**Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been full of contradictions over this whole tariff ordeal. He blames U.S. tariffs for shrinking the economy and job losses, but he also says Canada is getting a great deal with the U.S. on tariffs.

Since the Prime Minister took office, the deficit has doubled, Canada has the fastest-shrinking G7 economy with the second-highest unemployment rate, \$54 billion of net investment has left Canada and 86,000 Canadians have lost their jobs. When is the Prime Minister going to start delivering on his rhetoric? When are we going to get results?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Evan Solomon (Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister gave 22 million Canadians a tax cut so families could put more money in their pockets. The Prime Minister, right now, has a team negotiating with the United States to make sure we protect Canada's position as the best country in the world with the lowest tariff rates.

We are building the economy of the future together. I know the hon. member will support that.

\* \* \*

• (1445)

**FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

**Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised to negotiate a win with President Trump by July 21. There is still no win and still no deal. Because the Prime Minister failed to negotiate a deal, U.S. tariffs on Canadian softwood jumped to 35% this summer, and next week, they will jump to 45%.

Since 2015, in B.C., 29 mills have closed and we have lost over 68,000 jobs. For the sake of all British Columbians, will the Prime Minister finally get a deal done and end U.S. tariffs on softwood lumber?

**Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are working extremely hard to open new markets across the country and around the world. Ninety-six per cent of agriculture products are moving tariff-free across the border into the U.S. We are proud of that. We are going to stand alongside our farmers. We signed a new bilateral agreement with Indonesia and we are continuing to work hard.

Next week, when a lot of people in this House will be putting their feet up, we will be in Mexico working on more deals.

**Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised to negotiate a win with President Trump. He promised a deal by July 21. Well, it is October, and still no deal and still no win. Instead, tariffs on Canada have doubled. Now we hear the PMO is reportedly telling media that tomorrow, all steel and aluminum tariffs will be lifted, but what about lumber? U.S. lumber tariffs on Canada have increased by more than 100%. Jobs have been lost and mills have been closed.

Will the Prime Minister's long-overdue deal tomorrow include an end to tariffs on Canada's incredible forest industry, yes or no?

**Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been clear that U.S. tariffs on Canadian softwood lumber are absolutely unjustified, and we are working at every level to resolve the softwood lumber dispute.

To date, we have announced more than \$50 million in income supports for more workers, \$700 million in loan guarantees and \$500 million in capital investments to make the industry more competitive and to retool it for the future, including by building more Canadian homes.

We will buy Canadian, we are ready to build and we are changing federal procurement processes to require companies contracting with the federal government to procure Canadian lumber. This is how we build the strongest economy in the G7. That is how we win a trade war. It is one we did not ask for but one we will not back down from.

**Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I guess that is a no.

The Prime Minister promised elbows up during the last election. So far, on Vancouver Island, all we have are job losses, mill closures and higher prices for virtually every good in our society. Around \$54 billion has fled the country, 86,000 people have lost their jobs and right now, the entire coastal forest industry is on the brink of total collapse.

Will the Prime Minister demand the lifting of tariffs on Canadian lumber in any trade deal with the United States, or is he preparing to throw our forestry workers and incredible forestry communities under the bus?

**Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will always be there for forest workers. That is why we have invested so heavily in them and will continue to do so.

This trade war came to our shores, but we are going to finish it by being strong supporters of industry, being strong supporters of Canadian workers and making sure we get the job done.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Bruce Fanjoy (Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians in my riding of Carleton and across the country can see the generational investment that our government is making in the Canadian Armed Forces. As Canada diversifies its trade relations and expands its military presence around the world, we know that the impact on industries here, at home, is a positive one.

Can the minister update the House on recent investments in our national defence?

**Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague and thank him for his question. In fact, we are moving fast to meet the needs of our armed forces. We just announced the creation of the new defence investment agency to speed up the procurement, and today we are debating Bill C-11, which seeks to modernize the military justice system to better support our forces.

On this side of the House, when the issue is as serious as national defence, we act quickly.

*Oral Questions*

• (1450)

[English]

**JUSTICE**

**Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal bail has allowed repeat violent offenders to terrorize our communities. Despite promising decisive action, the Prime Minister continues to keep his Liberal bail in place, causing more chaos on our streets.

Our jail not bail act has the support of police chiefs, unions, victim advocacy groups, survivors and their loved ones. MPs will vote today to fast-track that bill in the chamber. Canadians are watching.

What will it take? How many lives have to be lost before the Prime Minister puts aside his partisanship and scraps Liberal bail?

**Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we completely agree that violent and repeat offenders should not be released back into our communities on bail.

While we appreciate the opposition's attempt with its motion, it is a bit weak. It misses the mark on key changes that need to be implemented in order to keep a wide array of criminals behind bars.

We will be introducing comprehensive bail and sentencing reforms that have been created in consultation with law enforcement, Crown lawyers and provincial and territorial governments. Our bill that is coming up is a tough-on-crime bill.

**Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals keep telling Canadians to be patient. Say that to the families of the loved ones who have lost their children and their grandchildren on the streets of Canada.

Every day the Liberals delay, 1,600 more violent crimes happen in our country. The Woodstock TD robbery suspect was out on bail. In the murder of Constable Pierzchala, the suspect was out on bail. In the murder of Tori Dunn, the offender was out on bail.

Enough is enough. It is time to scrap Liberal bail. If the Prime Minister will not scrap Liberal bail, will he at least do the decent thing, show some compassion and get out of the way?

**Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, violent and repeat offenders should not be released on bail. We agree with this. That is why we are bringing forward comprehensive bail reform. We want to get it right. We do not want to pass something that is weak and that lets violent offenders back onto our streets.

**Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal bail laws have unleashed a bloodbath of violent crime across the country. Bill C-75, the catch-and-release Liberal bail law, is the problem. The Prime Minister has kept Liberal bail in place, causing more bloodshed over his last six months.

Conservatives listened to police and victims and drafted a bill to end Liberal bail and restore city streets. The vote is today. Victims and frontline officers are watching the government.

Will the Prime Minister stop protecting criminals, put politics aside and vote to scrap Liberal bail?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada**

**Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, listening to the member's question, it is clear that there are several deficiencies with the approach that he has put forward.

First, Bill C-75 actually made it harder for offenders who have been charged with intimate partner violence to be released on bail. He would make it easier for them to get out into our communities.

Second, he claims to have engaged with law enforcement in the formation of the bill. When we look at the measures they are proposing to put forward, they barely scratch the surface of what law enforcement has told us in the first few minutes of conversations.

We have a comprehensive set of reforms coming to the bail system that will be designed to make communities safer. I hope that in the next number of weeks, when the bill comes forward, Conservatives will finally do something—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations.

**Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us look at some examples of government inaction.

In Vancouver, police had to arrest the same 40 offenders 6,000 times in one year. In Peel, police arrested 18 suspects for home invasions and carjackings, and half are already released on bail. In Saskatchewan, Myles Sanderson was out on release after 59 convictions when he murdered 11 people.

Premiers, police chiefs, mayors and victim groups are all begging the government for action. If the Prime Minister refuses to vote to scrap Liberal bail, will he get out of the way so that Conservatives can do it themselves?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with great respect to my hon. colleague, we have one point of agreement, which is that we need to take action and change Canada's laws to make it harder for violent offenders to be released into our communities.

The good news is that the legislation we are putting forward will do exactly that. What I cannot accept is a half-baked idea from the Conservative Party, which seems to have taken something it copied and pasted off an American bumper sticker to adopt laws in this country.

In the last federal election, sovereignty was at the core of the electoral choice that Canadians made. I can tell members that constituents in my riding, as I expect in those of the members opposite, want Canadian laws to be made in Canada.

**Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals keep talking about the things they will do. They can do something today and vote for our motion for jail not bail. The Liberals' criminal experiments have unleashed a wave of violence on our streets. Police and victims agree Bill C-75 is the problem. The Prime Minister talks tough on crime, but he has had six months and he has done nothing. Conservatives are listening, and that is why we put our jail not bail bill up for vote today. This country is watching this vote.

When will the Liberals finally get on board and stop giving the criminals a free pass?

• (1455)

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the party opposite wants to be serious on crime, it needs to support legislation in front of the House that will advance criminal justice reform. We have Bill C-2 before the House, which the opposition is unwilling to support. This is a measure that was asked for by law enforcement. It will strengthen our border to make sure our country is safe. There is no doublespeak here because, on this side of the aisle, we will bring forward bail reform, and we will ensure it is safe and charter-compliant.

**Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe my ears. The minister just said we need to support legislation before the House, but they have yet to put forward a bail reform bill. We have put forward a bill today. It is time for them to support it.

Sadly, there are too many countless examples of the deadly failures of the Liberals' criminal experiments. In July, a young mother was killed in broad daylight by her ex-husband with a hammer. This brutal attack happened mere hours after he was convicted of assaulting her. He was on bail. He was released after he was convicted.

It is time for the Liberals to end these soft-on-crime experiments. It is time for them to put their blind partisanship aside, stand with us and pass the jail not bail bill.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have government legislation in front of the House, Bill C-2, which the party opposite could support and pass. These are very important items that law enforcement has asked for. Throughout the summer, I had the opportunity to meet with police chiefs, police associations and others in law enforcement who have asked for very important tools so they can do their job better and make sure criminals are off their streets.

If the party opposite is serious about criminal justice reform, it will start by supporting Bill C-2.

**Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal bail has caused a bloodbath of crime in communities nation-

### Oral Questions

wide. The culprit is Bill C-75, the catch-and-release Liberal bail law. The Prime Minister has kept that awful law in place over his last six months in power, but Conservatives have been taking advice from police and victims to draft a new bill to scrap Liberal bail and bring peace to our streets. The House votes on it today. Victims and police are watching.

Will the Prime Minister put partisanship aside and vote to scrap Liberal bail?

**Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we spent this summer consulting with experts across this country to come up with a comprehensive plan to address criminality in our country.

Quite frankly, their bill is weak. Our bill will address everything that is in their bill and much more. It will keep a wide array of criminals behind bars. We have Bill C-2 in front of the House right now. Bill C-2 addresses many cases, such as murder, extortion, child exploitation and sextortion. Many of our vulnerable children have committed suicide in this country. I asked the Conservatives—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[Translation]

**Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if members are familiar with the story of Gabie Renaud, the woman who was killed four weeks ago in Saint-Jérôme, Quebec, by a man who had been arrested 30 times and had failed to comply with his release conditions 16 times. All of this was caused by Liberal catch-and-release laws, like Bill C-75.

There is actually some good news. My colleague, the member for Oxford, introduced Bill C-242, which was drafted in consultation with police officers and victims' groups. This bill is ready to be passed right away.

Will the Prime Minister ask his government and his MPs to vote today, following question period, to advance the member for Oxford's bill, yes or no?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we need to change Canada's laws to strengthen the bail system. At the same time, we know that the bill before the House today has many flaws.

*Oral Questions*

• (1500)

*[English]*

As we go forward, we are not going to take a bill that is completely deficient and does not scratch the surface of what law enforcement, provinces and territories and experts have informed us on over the last few months. Our job is not to pander with slogans but to advance solutions to help keep Canadians safe. That is what the government legislation is going to do.

*[Translation]*

**Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was the Liberals who caused those deficiencies over the past 10 years, with the bills and laws that were put in place, such as Bill C-5, Bill C-75 and Bill C-83. All of those laws have led to a drastic increase in crime in Canada.

We have a bill that has been tabled in the House. This bill was drafted in consultation with police officers and victims groups. This bill will make our streets and other women safer so that they do not suffer the same fate as Gabie Renaud.

Will this government do the right thing and vote in favour of our motion this afternoon?

*[English]*

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's argument is self-defeating. He suggests that one of the laws to blame when it comes to bail should be repealed when in fact that would make it easier for someone charged with intimate partner violence to be released on bail. If someone is going to be critical of a piece of legislation on the floor of the House of Commons, it is a good idea to read it first.

We have spent months engaging with law enforcement, with provincial and territorial counterparts, with constitutional experts and with those who advocate on behalf of victims to ensure we are moving forward with policies that are going to keep Canada safe. People want solutions, not slogans, and that is what we will deliver.

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*[Translation]***HEALTH**

**Eric St-Pierre (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, too many people face barriers when trying to access sexual and reproductive health services. Whether that is due to lack of knowledge, discrimination or geographic isolation, more effort is needed to develop additional resources, raise awareness and provide logistical support.

Can the Minister of Health tell us what the government is doing to improve the availability and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services and information?

**Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every person deserves access to sexual and reproductive health services, regardless of when and where they live. That is why I was so pleased to announce last week that we are allocating funding to groups such as the Disabled Women's Network Canada, the Canadian Association of Community Health Centres and other organiza-

tions that are proposing community-based solutions to expand access to sexual and reproductive health services.

This will help many more Canadians participate fully in the labour market.

\* \* \*

*[English]***JUSTICE**

**Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal policies like Liberal bail have caused a bloodbath of crime throughout Canada. So much of this comes back to the Liberal bail provisions of Bill C-75.

Canadians should not have fear, because we have a jail not bail bill that we will be voting on today. In fact, Peel, Halton and, minutes ago, the Toronto police associations endorsed our jail not bail bill. When the justice minister says that our bill is deficient, will he tell those police associations they are wrong?

**Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, like I have said before, our comprehensive legislation just coming out—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

We are going to take that one from the top. I suppose I could turn up the volume a bit more, but I would like to try to keep it at this level and see if we can respect that.

The Secretary of State for Combatting Crime has the floor.

**Hon. Ruby Sahota:** Mr. Speaker, like I said, we spent the summer consulting with police chiefs across the country, and associations. The comprehensive legislation that will be coming out in a few weeks is recommended by police agencies across this country. It contains a lot more than the piece of legislation being offered by the Conservatives. Quite frankly, their piece of legislation is weak. It does not address all aspects of crime.

Everything Canadians are looking for will be addressed in our upcoming bill.

**Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the legislation is so weak, why are the Peel, Halton and, minutes ago, Toronto police associations endorsing our legislation?

The reality is that bail is out of control. In Kelowna, 15 people were responsible for 1,335 police calls, with one person responsible for 223 of those. He is alleged to have violated bail 31 times and has not showed up for court 32 times.

The Liberals tell us what they are going to do. What have they done in the last 10 years? It is diddly-poo. Will they pass our bill, yes or no?

• (1505)

**Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, do members know what else has been endorsed by police across this country? It is Bill C-2, our stronger borders bill. Every police agency across this country has endorsed that piece of legislation. Canada is the only country among the G7 and the Five Eyes that does not have lawful access legislation. It is so important for protecting children who are being exploited online. Will the Conservatives stop being concerned about the privacy of criminals?

**Amarjeet Gill (Brampton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal bail has caused a bloodbath of crime in communities across this country. Just last week, a man was stabbed on a bus in Brampton by a criminal out on bail.

Over the last six months in power, the Prime Minister has kept Liberal Bill C-75 in place, causing more bloodshed. Conservatives have taken police and victims' advice to draft a bill that would scrap Liberal bail and bring peace to our streets.

The House vote is today. Victims and police are watching us. Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and vote to scrap Liberal bail today?

**Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, our bill is comprehensive and is much stronger than the Conservative bill. I believe the Conservatives will be happy to see it in the coming days. It addresses all their issues and much more.

We have been a tough-on-crime government since we took office. Our top priority has been to address these issues, with Bill C-2 and with listing the Bishnoi gang as a terrorist organization. We have been able to crack down on criminals across this country. I want to thank law enforcement for all the arrests they have been making and the many—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Sackville—Bedford—Preston.

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### FIREARMS

**Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all members of the House agree on the need to keep our communities and streets safe. A key part of that commitment is freeing Canadians from the scourge of gun violence, an issue our government is committed to addressing.

To that end, can the Minister of Public Safety explain how this critical work is being advanced through the assault-style firearms compensation program?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me thank the member for Sackville—Bedford—Preston for his very important question.

I am pleased to say that on October 1, the pilot program—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

### Oral Questions

**The Speaker:** There is a lot of noise coming from one of the corners. I will not name which corner.

The hon. minister, from the top.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree:** Mr. Speaker, let me thank the hon. member for Sackville—Bedford—Preston for this very important question.

Let me advise him that on October 1, we launched the firearms compensation program in Cape Breton. We already have people signing up and registering to ensure they are eligible for compensation. We look forward to the expansion of this program across Canada. In addition, we are working to secure the border, including with Bill C-2 and a \$1.2-billion investment in border security. We will have comprehensive bail, as well as other reforms coming forward.

We will keep Canadians—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

**Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the aluminum sector in Saguenay has been suffering even more ever since the new Liberal Prime Minister took office. We know that there will be a meeting with President Trump tomorrow.

To get elected, the Prime Minister clearly told Canadians that he was the right man for negotiating with the Americans. Today we see that the tariffs have doubled.

Does the Prime Minister finally plan to keep his promise to negotiate a winning agreement that will put an end to the tariffs?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent question. He knows that we have always invested in the aluminum sector. The aluminum sector is a key sector, a strategic sector, like the steel, forestry and automobile sectors. We have even had meetings together.

He knows that, on this side of the House, we will always be there to support our workers in the aluminum industry. We will always be there to support the aluminum industry. We will always be there to stand up for Canada's interests.

*Business of Supply*

● (1510)

*[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, coastal first nations oppose crude oil projects going through their territories and strongly support the tanker moratorium protecting British Columbia's Great Bear Rainforest. They have built a sustainable economy that creates jobs, supports communities and safeguards globally significant ecosystems. Premier Smith's pipeline push ignores their indigenous rights.

When introducing Bill C-5, the Prime Minister pledged no province or indigenous group would be forced into unwanted projects. Will the government uphold that promise?

**Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Building Canada Act has very strong provisions in it to make sure there is indigenous consultation. It also has strong provisions to make sure that what we are doing is building a strong Canada for the future.

The Premier of British Columbia and the Premier of Alberta can have conversations as to the path forward, but we will be making sure that we are building a strong Canada for the future.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—PASSAGE OF BILL C-242

The House resumed from October 2 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:11 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Oxford relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

● (1525)

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

*(Division No. 40)***YEAS**

## Members

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Aboultaif  | Aitchison                                      |
| Albas      | Allison  |
| Anderson   | Anstey   |
| Arnold     | Au   |
| Baber      | Bailey   |
| Baldinelli | Barlow   |
| Barrett    | Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt) |
| Berthold   | Bexte  |
| Bezan      | Block  |
| Bonk       | Borrelli                                       |
| Bragdon    | Brassard                                       |
| Brock      | Calkins  |
| Caputo     | Chambers                                       |
| Chong      | Cobena   |
| Cody       | Cooper   |
| Dalton     | Dancho   |

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|---|---|
| Davidson                                | Davies (Niagara South)                      |
| Dawson                                  | Deltell                                     |
| d'Entremont                             | DeRidder                                    |
| Diotte                                  | Doherty                                     |
| Dowdall                                 | Duncan                                      |
| Epp                                     | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake) |
| Falk (Provencher)                       | Gallant                                     |
| Généreux                                | Genuis                                      |
| Gill (Calgary Skyview)                  | Gill (Brampton West)                        |
| Gill (Calgary McKnight)                 | Gill (Windsor West)                         |
| Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)         | Gladu                                       |
| Godin                                   | Goodridge                                   |
| Gourde                                  | Groleau                                     |
| Guglielmin                              | Gunn  |
| Hallan                                  | Hardy                                       |
| Ho                                      | Hoback                                      |
| Holman                                  | Jackson                                     |
| Jansen                                  | Jeneroux                                    |
| Jivani                                  | Kelly                                       |
| Khanna                                  | Kibble                                      |
| Kirkland                                | Kmiec                                       |
| Konanz                                  | Kram  |
| Kramp-Neuman                            | Kronis                                      |
| Kuruc                                   | Kusie                                       |
| Lake                                    | Lantsman                                    |
| Lawton                                  | Lefebvre                                    |
| Leslie                                  | Lewis (Essex)                               |
| Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)               | Lloyd                                       |
| Lobb                                    | Ma  |
| Mahal                                   | Majumdar                                    |
| Malette (Kapusking—Timmins—Mushkegowuk) | Mantle                                      |
| Martel                                  | Mazier                                      |
| McCauley                                | McKenzie                                    |
| McLean (Calgary Centre)                 | Melillo                                     |
| Menegakis                               | Moore                                       |
| Morrison                                | Motz  |
| Muys                                    | Nater                                       |
| Patzer                                  | Paul-Hus                                    |
| Poilievre                               | Redekopp                                    |
| Reid                                    | Rempel Garner                               |
| Reynolds                                | Richards                                    |
| Roberts                                 | Rood  |
| Ross                                    | Rowe  |
| Ruff                                    | Scheer                                      |
| Schmale                                 | Seeback                                     |
| Shiple                                  | Small                                       |
| Steinley                                | Stevenson                                   |
| Strahl                                  | Strauss                                     |
| Stubbs                                  | Thomas                                      |
| Tochor                                  | Tolmie                                      |
| Uppal                                   | Van Popta                                   |
| Vien                                    | Viersen                                     |
| Vis                                     | Wagantall                                   |
| Warkentin                               | Waugh                                       |
| Williamson                              | Zimmer — 142                                |

**NAYS**

## Members

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| Acan   | Al Soud           |
| Ali  | Alty              |
| Anand  | Anandasangaree    |
| Auguste  | Bains             |
| Baker  | Bardeesy          |
| Barsalou-Duval                                 | Battiste          |
| Beaulieu                                       | Beech             |
| Belanger (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River) | Bendayan          |
| Bittle   | Blair             |
| Blanchet                                       | Blanchette-Joncas |
| Blois  | Bonin             |
| Boulerice                                      | Brière            |
| Brunelle-Duceppe                               | Carney            |

Carr  
Chagger  
Champoux  
Chartrand  
Chen  
Chi  
Clark  
Cormier  
Dabrusin  
Danko  
DeBellefeuille  
Deschênes-Thériault  
Dhaliwal  
Diab  
Duguid  
Earle  
El-Khoury  
Eyolfson  
Fanjoy  
Fisher  
Fortier  
Fragiskatos  
Freeland  
Fuhr  
Gainey  
Gasparro  
Gazan  
Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)  
Grant  
Guay  
Gull-Masty  
Hanley  
Hepfner  
Hodgson  
Housefather  
Iacono  
Jaczek  
Joly  
Kayabaga  
Khalid  
Koutrakis  
Lambropoulos  
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)  
Larouche  
Lauzon  
Lavoie  
Leitão  
Lightbound  
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)  
MacDonald (Cardigan)  
Malette (Bay of Quinte)  
May  
McKelvie  
McKnight  
McPherson  
Michel  
Miller  
Morrissey  
Naqvi  
Nguyen  
Normandin  
Oliphant  
O'Rourke  
Perron  
Plamondon  
Provost  
Rana  
Rocheffort  
Royce  
Saini  
Sari  
Sawatzky

Casey  
Champagne  
Chang  
Chatel  
Chenette  
Church  
Connors  
Coteau  
Dandurand  
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
Deschênes  
Desrochers  
Dhillon  
Duclos  
Dzerowicz  
Ehsassi  
Erskine-Smith  
Fancy  
Fergus  
Fonseca  
Fortin  
Fraser  
Fry  
Gaheer  
Garon  
Gaudreau  
Gerretsen  
Gould  
Greaves  
Guilbeault  
Hajdu  
Harrison  
Hirtle  
Hogan  
Hussen  
Idlout  
Johns  
Joseph  
Kelloway  
Klassen  
Lalonde  
Lamoureux  
Lapointe (Sudbury)  
Lattanzio  
Lavack  
LeBlanc  
Lemire  
Long  
MacDonald (Malpeque)  
MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Maloney  
McGuinty  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
McLean (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke)  
Ménard  
Miedema  
Mingarelli  
Myles  
Nathan  
Noormohamed  
Ntumba  
Olszewski  
Osborne  
Petipas Taylor  
Powlowski  
Ramsay  
Robertson  
Romanado  
Sahota  
Sari  
Savard-Tremblay  
Schiefke

### Routine Proceedings

Sgro  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Simard  
Solomon  
Ste-Marie  
Sudds  
Thériault  
Turnbull  
van Koeverden  
Villeneuve  
Weiler  
Yip  
Zerucelli

Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Sodhi  
Sousa  
St-Pierre  
Tesser Derksen  
Thompson  
Valdez  
Vandenbeld  
Watchorn  
Wilkinson  
Zahid  
Zuberi— 196

### PAIRED

Members

Lawrence

Mendès— 2

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion defeated.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, the time provided for Government Orders will be extended by 12 minutes.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 104 and Standing Order 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, regarding the membership of committees in the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the fourth report later this day.

\* \* \*

### CANADA LABOUR CODE

**Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-247, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code.

She said: Mr. Speaker, today I am so proud to table my bill to stop governments from abusing section 107 of the Canada Labour Code to force workers back to work. Whether it is Air Canada, Canada Post, the railways or the ports, the message is always the same: When big corporations complain, the government caves. This is a direct violation of workers' rights, the right to strike and the right to free collective bargaining. These rights were won through generations of struggle and sacrifice, yet government after government violates the rights of workers whenever it is politically convenient.

If members of Parliament truly believe in workers' rights, they must stop siding with corporate interests and commit to repealing section 107, because workers' rights are not optional; they are the foundation of a fair and just democracy.

*Routine Proceedings*

I encourage all members of the House to support my bill that would repeal section 107 of the Canada Labour Code once and for all.

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

\* \* \*

• (1530)

**TIME CHANGE ACT**

**Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-248, An Act respecting the holding of a pan-Canadian conference on time change.

She said: Mr. Speaker, as the Government of Canada focuses on building one economy that works for everyone, by removing federal barriers, expediting nation-building projects and making things more affordable, we must look at all avenues that can supplement this effort. That is why today I am presenting the private member's bill entitled an act respecting the holding of a Canadian conference on time change, to start the conversation and hopefully end the outdated practice of changing our clocks twice a year. This unnecessary barrier impacts the lives of Canadians in many ways and in many different sectors, particularly our health and mental health, public safety and the agriculture sector, as well as shift workers and the lives of children, parents and seniors.

That is why, in the bill, I am asking the federal government to lead the charge by holding a pan-Canadian conference alongside our provincial and territorial partners and indigenous leaders, to listen to the experts, find a consensus to end the practice of time change and establish one fixed time in Canada.

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

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion: That the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be amended as follows: Mr. Wilkinson, North Vancouver—Capilano, for Mr. Ferguson, Hull—Aylmer.

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

**An hon. member:** No.

\* \* \*

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it now being later this day, if the House gives its consent, I move that the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay. It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

**PETITIONS**

## BANK CLOSURES

**Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to rise today to table a petition on behalf of my constituents to halt the closing of the Royal Bank of Canada at the corner of Sargent and Sherbrook in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Unfortunately, in recent years, Winnipeg Centre has witnessed the departure of several bank branches in our neighbourhood. This has been very stressful for our community, which is home to diverse populations, including newcomers, indigenous people, seniors and young families, that depend on access to brick-and-mortar banks within reasonable walking distance from their home. The closure of the bank branches leaves our lower-income neighbours more vulnerable to predatory lenders and exploitative check-cashing operations.

I wrote to the Minister of Industry and the Minister of Finance to raise the concern, but I did not receive a reply from their offices.

I am sincerely thankful for the hard work of my constituents who helped organize signatures for the petition, and I hope that this sign of support from our community will finally push the government to act and to help uphold the financial well-being of the people of Winnipeg Centre.

## FRIENDSHIP CENTRES

**Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to bring forward a petition on behalf of Canadians, especially petitioners from the Port Alberni Friendship Center, which is in the process of, next week, having its sixtieth anniversary.

The petitioners are calling for enhanced support for friendship centres. They highlight that friendship centres are vital community hubs providing culturally appropriate services in health, education, housing, employment and youth programming. They note that governments have increasingly relied on these centres to respond to socio-economic conditions, climate emergencies and the toxic drug crisis, yet federal funding has not kept pace with inflation or the real cost of services since 2005.

The petitioners therefore call on the Government of Canada to provide enhanced, stable and predictable funding, to invest in the modernization of facilities and to fully recognize the critical role friendship centres play in reconciliation and in supporting indigenous peoples across urban, rural and remote communities. We owe them a ton of gratitude.

• (1535)

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

**Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to table a petition on behalf of religious institutions under attack in Abbotsford—South Langley and nationwide. Under the Liberal government, homelessness, addiction and mental health issues are at an all-time high. Stripping charitable status from religious organizations is a draconian attack on the communities that protect the most vulnerable.

As a Sikh, my community alone donates hundreds of thousands of free meals each year. I fully support the petition and its call to ensure that the Liberal finance committee does not go after the 30,000 charities based on advancement of religion, which make up 42% of Canada's charitable sector. Religious communities selflessly protect Canadians, and the tax change is unlawful.

PAY EQUITY

**Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to present a petition on something of concern to many of my constituents, which is the rather stale issue, still not solved, of equal pay for work of equal value, and gender parity as required under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Women in Canada are still not paid equal pay for work of equal value. Women receive 21¢ less than men for every dollar earned for substantially the same work. Therefore the petitioners call on the House to enact legislation and meaningful policies to promote pay equality and pay equity to get equal treatment for the women of Canada.

\* \* \*

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be amended as follows: Mr. Wilkinson (North Vancouver-Capilano) for Mr. Fergus (Hull-Aylmer).

[Translation]

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

There being no dissenting voice, it is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

Government Orders

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will say that my time is not being split, because it is already split, and I am the second half. I say that because I am torn and split over the bill, so I will be sharing my thoughts and comments over the next few minutes. I have been asked to speak to Bill C-11 given the veterans affairs committee's work on MST, military sexual trauma, in the last Parliament.

I am proud to speak to this important issue, but I wish it was not necessary. During that study, the veterans affairs committee heard countless first-hand accounts of how terrible military sexual trauma can be and the lasting effects it can have on a person and their family.

First, we have to solemnly thank all the survivors who came forward to bravely share their stories and pursue claims despite all the challenges thrown in their way. Sadly, the VAC claims process still places a considerable burden of proof on survivors, sometimes forcing survivors to recount their horrific stories several times, and from what I have heard, time and time again.

Many witnesses shared their difficulties, delays and ongoing barriers when seeking help for MST-related health impacts. This is extremely important to note. MST survivors often experience lasting mental health effects, such as PTSD, depression and substance abuse, compounded by physical health problems and challenges in interpersonal relationships.

Many women came forward with heartbreaking accounts, but they had the courage to demand change and accountability from the system they were in. I would like to share some quotes from survivors who shared their accounts with our committee: "I came forward because I could not live with the weight of silence anymore. The trauma followed me home, and VAC made the process so hard that I nearly gave up." That is not a lone comment.

*Government Orders*

Another comment was, “Being believed matters. In the military, the burden of proof is too heavy. My entire story was put on trial again when I applied for support from Veterans Affairs.”

Another witness shared this: “There is strength in telling our stories, but it's exhausting to relive the trauma with each new bureaucratic step. We need a system that listens the first time.”

Another comment from a witness was, “When I tried to access help, I felt isolated and invisible. Services were not designed for people like me—they didn't understand what I had lived through.”

These are heartbreaking testimonies that have come forward. VAC needs to train case managers in trauma. Too often, I was confronted by disbelief or ignorance when explaining the reality and the complexity of sexual trauma. The veterans affairs committee dealt with and listened to many witnesses. It was heartbreaking. This committee is doing good work, and we are also going to be hearing about veterans who have committed suicide and how we can prevent this for our veterans community, so it is not an easy committee to be on.

One comment that really hit home to me was, “All I ever wanted was recognition, support, and to be treated like my experiences mattered. MST ended my career and changed my life in every way.”

We need to be there for victims during their time in service and after their time in service.

● (1540)

I am someone who has served and a father of two young girls, and this issue hits extremely close to home. I can only hope that by the time my children are adults, parliamentarians will not still be looking at ways to fix these ongoing crises. Sadly, the current bill would not fix them.

First, I will say clearly to anyone watching that the Liberals are not serious about this issue. If they were, they would not have tabled Bill C-66 mere months before the last election, but they did. If they were serious, they would not have allowed it to die on the Order Paper without real debate. If they were serious, they would have listened to the experts explain the legislation's problems instead of copying and pasting the legislation into Bill C-11, the bill we are debating today. Frankly, Liberals cannot be trusted to stop sexual assault within the CAF. They constantly choose soft-on-crime policies instead of advocating for victims. We have seen that today in the House. Victims seem to be ignored, but those who commit the crimes seem to get away with it.

Those of us on this side of the House believe we must continue to address sexual misconduct, discrimination, racism and other forms of harassment. All military members deserve to have a safe and respectful workplace. All victims of military sexual misconduct deserve timely justice. The Harper government accepted all recommendations from the Deschamps report to eliminate all forms of sexual harassment in the CAF. After a decade of the Liberal government and two more reports from Supreme Court justices, victims of military sexual misconduct are still no closer to having their cases dealt with properly.

Sadly, parts of Bill C-11 would simply open the door to potential political interference and partisan appointments. First, the bill would give increased power to the Minister of National Defence to issue guidelines with respect to prosecutions. Second, the director of military prosecution, the director of defence counsel services and the provost marshal general would be appointed by the Governor in Council. Canadians are worried about political interference. Given the wide-ranging issues with the ways former defence minister Sajjan handled sexual misconduct cases in 2021, this is for good reason.

For over half a year, Justin Trudeau and former minister Sajjan continually covered up information on sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. Trudeau's team went to great lengths to block investigations and hide the truth from Canadians. For months in 2021, he orchestrated a cover-up to hide the fact that his top aide, Katie Telford, and former minister Sajjan had direct knowledge of the sexual misconduct allegation against the then chief of the defence staff.

In a statement on the report conducted by the status of women committee in 2021, Conservatives said, “it's become abundantly clear that there has been a lack of leadership” by the defence minister on the issue of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. Despite repeated problems, including handling of sexual misconduct allegations, then prime minister Trudeau left former defence minister Sajjan as the minister until after the next election. When sexual misconduct was studied at the national defence committee in 2021, the Liberals filibustered for weeks and then called an election before the committee was able to produce a report. Four Liberal MPs who participated in the filibuster are elected today. Let us be clear that Liberal political interference is not limited to national defence. Liberals have a long and proud history of it.

We have seen time and time again how the Liberals have involved themselves in military decisions when they should have stayed out. This means that parliamentarians who are veterans need to read and go through the bill in committee.

● (1545)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is so wrong in so many ways that I do not know where to begin. Maybe the member should realize that when we take a look at Justice Arbour's 48 recommendations, the goal is to achieve success on 47 of those before the end of this year. Many of the things the legislation would put in place through criminal law are already being administered, in part because of the government's drive to move and shift from military to civil court processes.

*Government Orders*

The member is just wrong on so many points. Will the Conservative brain trust recognize that if Conservatives want that 48th recommendation done before the end of this year, they need to get on-side? They have to allow the legislation to go to committee. This irresponsible and destructive force, which is better known as the Conservative Party, here on the floor of the House of Commons is the only—

• (1550)

**Fraser Tolmie:** Mr. Speaker, the destructive force is the Liberal government and the way it has treated our military and veterans. I cannot believe what I just heard. It is nothing but white noise from members of this party. They have done nothing for our military or our veterans.

You should be ashamed.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Order, please.

I remind the member to go through the Chair.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Joliette—Manawan.

[*Translation*]

**Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague whether such an amendment should have been made years ago. Various allegations were made, but little action followed, and the previous government did not really make a proactive effort to respond to these allegations.

[*English*]

**Fraser Tolmie:** Mr. Speaker, I have worked with the Bloc at the veterans affairs committee, and we have seen nothing but time-wasting by the Liberal Party rather than actually doing anything solid for our veterans. It is shameful. I have seen a vet from Quebec come to the veterans affairs committee with a suitcase of claims that have never been addressed. That is exactly what the Liberal Party has: suitcases of claims with nothing done. It is a shame.

**Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our hon. colleague for his service to our country. I know this member very well, and I know this is near and dear to him because of the time he served on the committee. He listened to the testimonies of the victims, as I have. Our hon. colleague is a veteran, a committee member and a friend and colleague to some of these victims; I want to know just how important this is to him, his friends and his former colleagues.

**Fraser Tolmie:** Mr. Speaker, I have probably been a little heated in some of my responses today because I am passionate. I am passionate about the military. I am passionate about how it has been neglected, and we need to actually support our military and properly equip it. I am also passionate about our veterans, who need proper care. They have served and have been willing to put their lives on the line. I want to be clear: As a vet, I was never in a position to put my life on the line when I was serving. I served on a small scale, but, honestly, I know people who have put their lives on the line, and they deserve better.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jill McKnight (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be

sharing my time with the member for Rivière-du-Nord. I am still learning French, so I will give my comments in English.

[*English*]

I wish to acknowledge my colleague for his service and thank him for his service to Canada.

On June 13, as the newly appointed Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, I had the profound honour of meeting a delegation of remarkable women veterans. They shared with me deeply personal stories of service, strength and the unique challenges they have faced as women veterans. Their voices were clear: Women veterans want to be recognized not only for their service but also for the distinct barriers they continue to face in access to care and support. They spoke of the power of peer connection, the need for trauma-informed systems and their steadfast hope that the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada will continue to evolve and grow in their supports for women. Their courage, advocacy and vision have shaped my conviction and are the reason I rise to speak today to underscore the importance of Bill C-11, the military justice system modernization act.

This legislation would be a significant step forward in addressing a deeply troubling aspect of military service, which is military sexual trauma, also known as MST. MST is a serious concern, with one in four women in our Armed Forces having experienced it in some form. It encompasses sexual harassment, assault and other forms of sexual violence that occur during military service. Trauma from these experiences can have lasting and devastating effects on our CAF members and veterans. It affects their short- and long-term mental health, their emotional well-being, personal relationships and overall quality of life.

### *Government Orders*

To fully understand the relevance of Bill C-11, it is important to first understand the connection between MST and post-traumatic stress disorder. Research has demonstrated that women in service, who are more likely to experience MST, are disproportionately affected by PTSD. The trauma from such experiences, including MST, often leads to a range of challenges, including but not limited to depression, anxiety and other mental health concerns. Veterans Affairs Canada recognizes that PTSD is not just a personal issue. It is a systemic one that has affected many people who have dedicated their lives to serving our country. Additionally, the effects of MST extend beyond the individual, impacting their families, relationships and communities. It can also lead to significant barriers in accessing the support and services they need. As a department committed to the well-being of our veterans, Veterans Affairs Canada understands the urgency of addressing these challenges comprehensively and effectively.

Upon the resumption of Parliament last month, I had a very informative and insightful conversation with Senator Rebecca Patterson, who is a veteran and a champion for members of the Canadian Armed Forces, veterans and their families. We discussed the complexities of MST and the urgent progress still needed.

Bill C-11 would recognize and respond to the unique needs of survivors of military sexual trauma. For too long, survivors of MST have faced insurmountable barriers to obtaining justice and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. We need to improve transparency and accountability within the military justice system and provide a mechanism for survivors to file complaints in a manner that respects their dignity and ensures their voices are heard. This bill would establish a clear framework for investigating and responding to allegations of sexual misconduct while also promoting an environment of accountability. In doing so, the bill would not only support survivors in their quest for justice, but also send a strong message that such behaviour will not be tolerated in the military.

Another pivotal element of Bill C-11 would be a much-needed culture change within the military and veteran communities. Addressing MST effectively requires a shift in attitudes and behaviours at all levels of the military establishment. It is essential that supports and services are both readily available and easily accessible to those who need them.

• (1555)

Equally important is ensuring that victims know where safe spaces exist for them to come forward to share their experiences. Veterans Affairs Canada recognizes that changing entrenched cultural norms is not easily achieved, but it remains essential for creating a safe and supportive environment for all service members.

Bill C-11's focus on prevention and cultural change is a proactive step toward ensuring that future generations of military personnel are protected from such trauma. By removing jurisdiction over sexual offences from the military chain of command, the bill could address the isolation, stigma and fear of reprisal that have silenced survivors for decades.

I extend my appreciation to my colleague the Minister of National Defence and his department for their leadership and diligence in putting forward this legislation. The collaboration between our de-

partments has been pivotal in shaping a response to MST that is both comprehensive and compassionate.

Our government's commitment to improving the military justice system, strengthening support for survivors and fostering a culture of respect and accountability remains unwavering. Its proactive approach and dedication to this cause will be instrumental in the passage of Bill C-11.

Together, the minister and I, as well as our departments, are committed to ensuring the well-being of those who serve and have served our country. My department actively collaborates with the Department of National Defence's sexual misconduct support and resource centre to develop additional supports for individuals affected by military sexual trauma. The resource centre's peer support program is a critical initiative that offers compassionate, trauma-informed support to veterans who have experienced MST.

By connecting survivors with trained peers who understand their unique challenges, this program fosters healing, resilience and a renewed sense of community. It is a meaningful step toward ensuring that no veteran faces their recovery journey alone. In addition to the work within our government, we must also continue to build and strengthen partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach. This includes collaborating with military leadership, advocacy groups, mental health professionals and survivors to create a support system that meaningfully improves outcomes.

While Bill C-11 represents a significant step forward, the work does not end here. We must remain vigilant in our efforts to support survivors, hold perpetrators accountable and promote a culture of respect and safety within the military and within veteran communities.

Veterans Affairs Canada is committed to continuing this work, ensuring that the provisions of Bill C-11 are implemented effectively, and that we remain responsive to the evolving needs of our veterans.

*Government Orders*

By passing Bill C-11, we would take an essential step toward addressing military sexual trauma with the urgency, care and compassion it merits. By working collaboratively with the Department of National Defence and other key partners, we will create a safer and more supportive environment for all those who have worn the uniform and ensure that their sacrifices are honoured by giving them the respect and care they deserve.

• (1600)

**Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask a question about Bill C-11 today, but the minister brought up a number of points regarding veterans, Canadian Armed Forces members and personnel, their service and the PTSD related to their service.

In 2017, I passed a bill here in the House, Bill C-211, which made Canada the first country in the world to develop a national framework with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder. I had assistance from all sides of the House to do that. It has been eight years, and we have not received an update from any of the ministries responsible for that.

Would the minister commit to giving us an update on where they are with requirements that were laid out within Bill C-211, the legislation that passed in 2017, that deals specifically with post-traumatic stress disorder, our members and our veterans, through their service?

**Hon. Jill McKnight:** Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs Canada takes the mental health of our veterans and the supports for them very seriously, and it will continue to advance the opportunities that we have available to support them. That included bringing in access to mental health supports, which was available for a two-year period with no waiting period, so that we could ensure that veterans got the help and support they needed right away without waiting on paperwork.

I would be happy to follow up with my colleague to discuss other steps in the works right now.

[*Translation*]

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and for offering to share her time with me.

That said, I would like to know whether she can tell us why roughly 10 years came and went between the day that Justice Marie Deschamps's first report was released and the day that this bill was tabled. We know that there was a number of earlier reports and bills, but it seems rather extreme to me that it should take 10 years to come up with a bill like this.

Can my colleague explain that time lapse?

• (1605)

[*English*]

**Hon. Jill McKnight:** Mr. Speaker, many things happened in the previous 10-year period, and I would concur that there is still more work to be done. Our government has accepted all of Justice Arbour's recommendations and intends to implement them.

In December 2022, the former minister of national defence presented a report to Parliament outlining the steps the government would take in response to each of the 48 recommendations, and we have been working on implementing them. Recommendation number five is the only recommendation that can exclusively be implemented through legislation, which is why it is the only Arbour recommendation addressed in this particular bill. The remaining 47 recommendations are being addressed through other means. We are taking steps to make the changes now, so we can improve the response for veterans.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister referenced the 48 recommendations. We anticipate we will be able to complete 47 of those as early as before the end of this year. If we had a sense of co-operation in working with the opposition parties, we could pass Bill C-11, which would then mean we could hit the target of completing all 48 recommendations. Even though the bill puts it into law, I think it is important that we recognize that military sexual harassment is currently being deferred to the civilian court system. It is not that we are lagging behind, but this would allow us to put into law what is already, at least in part, being done.

**Hon. Jill McKnight:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague brings up an important point.

As was referenced in both his question and previous remarks, there is an opportunity, through the passage of Bill C-11, to be able to advance one of the recommendations, which then puts us on track to have all of the recommendations implemented by the end of this year. I think that is an incredibly important accomplishment that will move our ability to support our veterans and our service members forward in responding to military sexual trauma.

[*Translation*]

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-11 gives us something we have been hoping for for a long time, namely an opportunity to improve the military justice system. Acts of sexual misconduct have been widely reported in the media over the past few years, severely affecting the reputation of the Canadian Armed Forces and its leaders. Although I have not been able to find data on this, it goes without saying that the situation has also likely severely affected recruitment efforts, as well as morale among female military members.

This bill is almost the same as Bill C-66, which died on the Order Paper in January when Parliament was prorogued and later dissolved, leading to the election in April.

### *Government Orders*

Several former justices of the Supreme Court of Canada have already studied the issue and made recommendations. First, there was the Hon. Justice Marie Deschamps, who tabled her report on March 27, 2015. That was over 10 years ago. Then there was the Hon. Morris J. Fish, who tabled his in June 2021. That was the third independent review. It contained 107 recommendations, including one to review the process for appointing three key positions in the military justice system: the provost marshal, the director of military prosecutions and the director of defence counsel services. I think everyone can agree that, in a justice system, the judge, the prosecutor and the defence attorney are pretty important.

Justice Fish proposed better safeguards to protect these individuals from any pressure they might have been subjected to by the military hierarchy. Bill C-11 addresses that recommendation, and we think it is a wise decision. However, we must remain vigilant to ensure that politicians do not interfere in the justice process, which desperately needs reforms. We must not get to a point where we get rid of one form of interference in favour of another.

As has been mentioned several times in the House, the appointment process in our common law courts justice system is often manipulated. For one, we have often heard about the infamous “Liberalist”. I hope that the “Liberalist”, or the Conservative list, if they are elected in the next election, will not become the tool for appointing judges to the courts that will have to judge or act as prosecutors in cases of sexual assault in the military.

Prior to Justice Fish, in 2003, the late Right Hon. Antonio Lamer, a retired former chief justice, also submitted a report containing 88 recommendations. In 2012, the Hon. Patrick LeSage, former chief justice of the Ontario Superior Court, also submitted a report, which contained 55 recommendations. Finally, there was the Hon. Louise Arbour, former justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, who, after pointing out that the exercise had already been done, tabled her report in October 2025, more than 10 years after her colleague Justice Deschamps.

We in the Bloc Québécois believe that it is time to take action. We intend to support this bill and hope that it comes into force quickly so that we can have a military justice system that reflects Quebec and Canadian society.

In a recent media interview, the hon. Minister of National Defence said that victims need to have the confidence that the system is transparent and predictable and that they have the support that they need to come forward and to reveal what has happened to them. Not surprisingly, we agree. That is how it needs to be.

The armed forces as we knew them a century ago have given way to an army that is more open to the realities of our society. While the presence of women in the military was once an exception, even an anachronism, today it is the norm for about 15% to 20% of armed forces members. However, the organization of the armed forces has to adjust to this reality. Every member of our armed forces must feel comfortable and fully able to provide the services they are called upon to provide.

• (1610)

As I was saying, Bill C-11 will make it possible to modify the appointment process so it is no longer hierarchical. The following

appointments will now be made by the governor general in council, at the recommendation of the Minister of Defence: the Canadian Forces provost marshal, the director of military prosecutions and the director of defence counsel services. As I was saying earlier, this was among Justice Fish's recommendations, which were made a long time ago. Now it is in Bill C-11, which is a good thing.

Bill C-11 also proposes to remove the military courts' jurisdiction to try individuals for Criminal Code sexual offences. This is very important.

Some troubling situations have surfaced in recent years. We need only think of the case of General Jonathan Vance. He had been the focus of allegations of sexual misconduct long before the Conservative government decided to appoint him chief of the defence staff in the summer of 2015. He was alleged to have committed sexual misconduct, but the Conservatives did not see that as a problem and appointed him chief of the defence staff anyway. That seemed rather odd to us.

Then, in the fall of 2015, Justin Trudeau's Liberal government came to power. That government also did not bother removing General Vance from his position or do anything at all to limit the problems of sexual misconduct. On the contrary, allegations of sexual misconduct have escalated since 2015.

I will not go so far as to name every single person who has been the subject of allegations of misconduct. As a lawyer, I am aware that allegations of misconduct do not necessarily result in a guilty verdict. These individuals must be presumed innocent. That is fine, but it is still problematic at the social level. Society sees that people who lead the Canadian Armed Forces are the subject of repeated allegations of sexual assault or misconduct. Despite this, they are kept in their positions or even promoted. It makes no sense. I hope that Bill C-11 will enable us to move beyond that era.

The bill also removes the military's power to investigate. Yes, that is obviously needed. Members will agree that a military investigator whose boss is accused of sexual assault or sexual misconduct is in no position to conduct an impartial and effective investigation.

I also want to talk about the process for appointing military judges. The pool is being expanded. The idea is that the person closest in rank is not necessarily the person who should be appointed and that the person could come from any military rank. There are individuals who have undergone training their entire military careers and who may be qualified to be appointed as court martial judges. In many cases, they would probably be better suited to the job than the highest-ranking officer who wanted to do it. This group is going to be expanded. That is good news for us.

The group of people who can file complaints will also be expanded. That is more good news. We must help victims emerge from the shadows and leave behind the era when allegations of sexual misconduct undermined the credibility of our military forces and the lives of women who served in the armed forces. I thank these women for helping to change the hierarchy and the way the armed forces operate. This is the best news we have had in a long time.

• (1615)

**Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. We work together in committee, and because he is a lawyer, I greatly appreciate his thoughts on this bill.

I am very pleased to learn that the Bloc Québécois will support this bill so that we can pass it quickly. I think that is very important.

Toward the end of his speech, my colleague talked about the importance of giving military personnel, especially women, confidence that the system in which they can file a complaint will be neutral and independent of the military process.

I would like my colleague to elaborate on that.

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin:** Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

I understand very well why female members of the armed forces may have been quite hesitant to file a complaint against a superior for sexual assault or misconduct. I would have been too, knowing that the person conducting the investigation is largely subject to the orders of that individual and that the judge who will handle the case is also a member of the same military hierarchy. That would be pretty awkward. Ethically, it is rather obscene. It is just not right.

This situation must change so that women can feel comfortable filing complaints if they need to. That does not mean that all complaints will be founded, but at least there will be a serious complaint process so that they can be judged impartially.

• (1620)

**Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech.

As the member for Hull—Aylmer so aptly said earlier, it is always good to have people familiar with the legal profession among us to share their perspective when we talk about legal matters.

Based on his professional and personal experience, I would like my colleague to talk to us about the possible advantages of a military court over a civilian court when trying cases involving the military. We know that military judges are also part of the institution they are judging, but military knowledge is why military courts exist.

Could my colleague share his thoughts on what the current bill proposes based on his experience with civil and criminal courts, particularly in Quebec, if I remember correctly?

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent question. I have never testified before a court martial or a military court, so I cannot speak from experience.

### *Government Orders*

That said, I am well aware that a judge who has to hear a case like this will need some guidance on what military life is like. However, that sort of thing is an everyday occurrence in the courts. A judge can hear a case involving engineering without being an engineer or a case involving medical malpractice without being a doctor.

Judges are used to having to familiarize themselves with a topic before handing down a ruling. In my opinion, the same will apply to cases involving the military. Judges will need to be informed and receive explanations from the lawyers involved in the case. Surely that is better and more effective.

**Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague and friend to share his comments on the actions, or lack thereof, of the former Liberal minister of national defence in the case of Mr. Vance.

I will remind members that the ombudsman attempted to meet with the minister 12 times and that, on those 12 occasions, the minister refused to meet with him and review the evidence, saying he did not want to interfere with the investigation. However, his government did not hesitate to go after Vice-Admiral Mark Norman, who was speaking out against the actions of Scott Brison, who was part of that government at the time.

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin:** Mr. Speaker, either the former minister of national defence did not have the guts and acted in a cowardly manner, or he was instructed to act in a cowardly manner. Given the accusations at the time, it makes no sense that he refused to meet with the ombudsman, refused to look at these cases and refused to make a decision. That is not why he was appointed minister.

[*English*]

**Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Crowfoot.

I rise today on behalf of the women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces who call the Ottawa Valley home, and to speak to Bill C-11, the military justice system modernization act. This legislation, which was presented as reform, raises serious concerns about the future of justice for our Canadian Armed Forces and the government's ability to protect both the victims and the integrity of our military institutions.

Conservatives support our women and men in uniform. We honour their service and believe they deserve a workplace free from sexual misconduct, discrimination and harassment. We also believe they deserve a justice system that is fair, transparent and accountable.

Bill C-11 proposes to transfer jurisdiction over sexual offences committed in Canada from the military justice system to the civilian courts. This change was recommended by Justices Deschamps, Fish and Arbour, and it has been supported by many victims groups.

### *Government Orders*

Conservatives have long called for action on these recommendations. We have criticized the Liberal government for its delays and lack of urgency. Victims deserve justice, and they deserve it without political interference or bureaucratic excuses. However, this bill does not fully deliver on that promise. It would create a split system where offences committed in Canada are handled in the civilian courts while those committed abroad are under military jurisdiction.

This inconsistency risks undermining the investigative capacity of our military police. If they are no longer investigating sexual offences in Canada, how will they maintain the skills needed to handle cases overseas? This is not theoretical. We have already seen troubling examples of investigative failures.

In February of this year, Ontario Superior Court Justice Cynthia Petersen stayed charges against a Canadian Armed Forces member accused of sexually assaulting his wife. She found that the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service had shown bias, failed to document key evidence and even destroyed materials that should have been disclosed.

Justice Petersen called the misconduct "so egregious" that she had no choice but to halt the proceedings. She said it breached the accused's charter rights and shocked the conscience of the community. Two military police officers were suspended and an internal investigation was launched, but the damage was done. This case illustrates the dangers of a system that lacks accountability and transparency. It also raises the question about whether the military is capable of investigating its own conduct.

Another example is the case of Kristen Adams, a civilian employee working in Camp Adazi in Latvia. She was sexually assaulted by an Albanian NATO soldier who grabbed her breast while she was serving Canadian troops in the canteen. When she reported the assault, she was told by the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services that she should have expected such risks when accepting the job. They called it a cultural difference. They terminated her contract early and refused to call the incident a sexual assault.

Latvian military police conducted a superficial investigation, failed to interview witnesses and concluded there was no criminal offence. Canadian military police created a shadow file but had no jurisdiction to act. Adams was left without justice, without support and without answers.

This is what happens when jurisdiction is unclear and accountability absent. This is what happens when the system prioritizes optics over victims.

Bill C-11 does not fix this. It does not ensure that victims like Adams would be protected or that the perpetrators would be held accountable. It does not guarantee that investigations would be thorough or that justice would be served. It does not address the "culture of silence and deflection" that has plagued the military for years.

The case of Private Elvira Jaszberenyi is another sad example. She was a soldier who was raped by Corporal Oleksii Silin in a broom closet at CFB Borden. Military police who investigated her case told her that Corporal Silin was a sexual person. They told her that Silin's wife and kids had left him, suggesting this was a form of

punishment. The military police mentioned that as a Russian immigrant, Silin's culture may view slapping a woman as permissible.

● (1625)

Despite that, Silin confessed to the military police that he had pulled her into a broom closet and had sexual intercourse with her. However, what was not mentioned at the time was that Silin was already under investigation for a different sexual assault the year before, but the military refused to prosecute the case.

Private Jaszberenyi complained to the Military Police Complaints Commission, but the commission was not permitted to review all the relevant files, specifically the briefing from the military police to prosecutors. This was despite the fact that Justice Morris Fish had issued a recommendation that these files be provided to the Military Police Complaints Commission. Without access to the briefing notes, the commission was effectively prevented from determining if the refusal to prosecute was reasonable.

While the bill before us would remove the role of the military police from investigating sexual assaults in Canada, the bill would not implement Justice Fish's recommendation to give the commission access to key briefing notes.

Faced with an unresponsive military justice system and bureaucratic hurdles, Private Jaszberenyi would not be deterred. She pursued a private prosecution in civilian court after exhausting all military avenues. The trial exposed the failure of the military justice system to take her complaint seriously. It showed how the victims are forced to fight alone for justice. It showed how the system protects itself instead of the people it serves.

In the end, Silin was acquitted. According to a CTV report on the case, Justice Robert Gattrell "...said he agreed with the defence, which argued Jaszberenyi came across as someone with 'an agenda,' who took issue with the military's treatment of members, particularly women, who come forward with allegations of sexual assault and misconduct."

Private Jaszberenyi's own advocacy for justice was used against her. While it is no longer permitted to weaponize a woman's sexual history against her in court, apparently women must not be too insistent in seeking justice. Any effort we make to ensure another woman is not raped can and will be used against us.

Bill C-11 does not address the underlying culture that allowed this to happen in the first place. It would not prevent senior leadership from allowing serious charges to be downgraded to conduct violations. It would not ensure that civilian court outcomes are integrated with the code of service discipline. It would not fix the disconnect between military justice and civilian accountability. Instead, it would shift responsibility without solving the root issues.

*Government Orders*

The bill would also increase the independence of key military justice officials by having them appointed by the governor in council. While independence from the chain of command is important, the inconsistent term lengths and reappointment rules raise concerns. As well, giving the Minister of National Defence the power to issue guidelines on prosecutions opens the door to political interference. This is especially troubling given the history of interference in previous cases.

Conservatives believe in protecting victims and supporting the rights of the accused. We believe in a justice system that is fair, consistent and rooted in the principles of individual liberty. We do not support a parallel system that undermines these principles.

We also believe in transparency. The military has referred dozens of sexual offence cases to civilian authorities, but it cannot, or will not, reveal how many of these cases have resulted in charges. This lack of data makes it impossible to evaluate whether the transfer of jurisdiction is working. Victims deserve answers. Service members deserve clarity. Canadians deserve accountability.

Bill C-11 may be well-intentioned, but it is incomplete. It does not address the systemic failures that have plagued the military justice system. It would not ensure that victims would be heard or that accused members would be treated fairly. It does not restore trust.

Let us be honest about why the bill was delayed. The Liberals had this legislation ready as Bill C-66. They let it die when they prorogued Parliament. They delayed it again while they scrambled to cover up their green slush fund scandal. They delayed it again while they changed leaders behind closed doors. They delayed it again while they installed a man whose record includes tax haven investments, greenwashing scandals and ties to ethically compromised donors. They delayed justice for victims so they could protect their own political interests. That is the real story behind Bill C-11. That is why victims are still waiting. That is why the system is still broken.

We will push for a fulsome committee study to hear from victims, such as Private Jaszberenyi. We will demand changes that protect victims, support service members and strengthen our justice system.

• (1630)

We owe it to those who serve, we owe it to those who suffered and we owe it to Canada.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do believe that we owe it to those who are serving our Canadian Forces and even those who have left the Canadian Forces who still have grievances within the system.

The first nine minutes of the member's comments are hard to dispute as they justified why the government needs to act. When we take a look at the 48 recommendations, they are virtually all in place. Moving forward, we will hit 47 of them, with the exception of the passage of Bill C-11, the only one that actually requires a legislative change to transfer it to the civil judicial system. Just so the member is aware, that directive was given years ago so that we would actually start to see our civil judicial system dealing with these cases.

Can the member provide her thoughts in regard to why that was an important thing to do? We should not have to wait for the legislation.

**Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, that was important. What we are seeing is that the military police would cover up for their buddies. Commanders who were in charge of different prosecutions would cover up issues. The other thing is that the military police did not have the resources to do proper investigations. The chain of evidence was not kept in order.

For the purpose of it being more sterile, the prosecution suggested that it go to civilian courts. Then there would be less chance that the people who were the perpetrators could get involved and end up with a conviction that was not proper. From that standpoint, yes, we believe that will be one part of the solution. It was requested on behalf of many of the victims.

• (1635)

**Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that was a very passionate and factual speech. The fact of the matter is that in the 10 years that the Liberals have been in power, they have asked for report after report. Then when it was politically expedient and they needed a cover-up, they came up with this bill.

It is a fact that we have so many problems on the civilian justice side of things. As far as the Liberals releasing people on bail rather than sending them to jail, does the member think people who are victims in the military will actually see justice?

**Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, what is important is that any evidence gathered as part of an investigation should happen immediately, be completely transferred to civilian courts and taken over by police who know how to do it, who have the resources to conduct a proper investigation and gather evidence.

In fact, in many of the cases, women have not even been afforded the opportunity to have a rape test done, to gather evidence for that purpose. They are just switched over to the next mission. These incidents have lasting impacts as victims can be left with life-altering diseases, which can change the course of their lives completely.

**Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate our colleague for the work that she has done on these committees. During the 10 years I have been here, she has been a stalwart supporter of victims of military sexual trauma.

I am going to ask the same question I asked earlier on. How will the victims be protected by CAF structures as they wait for justice? It is a concern as both systems have been split and we still have victims who are still serving to this day.

*Government Orders*

**Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, there is no chance at this point for justice of any kind. What happens is that when a complaint is made, that person is segregated and put in a different part of the base altogether. They are separated from their job. Their continuing education stops. Any hope of furthering any rank structure is gone. When they go to the padre for guidance, the padre will tell them that when they joined the military, they handed over their life. Anything that happens is up to the military, so they have no recourse.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan, Taxation; the hon. member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Finance; the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac, Taxation.

**Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to speak in the House. Before I get into the substance of the bill, I would like to spend some time talking about the context in which this debate is taking place, because the legislative route that this bill took to get to this moment says everything about the tired, old, incompetent government. It is really worth taking a moment to examine that.

This bill is the second attempt to finally, after over 10 years, implement the recommendations of the Deschamps report to transfer the criminal prosecution for sexual offences to civilian court. This was contained in the report and recommendations made to the Harper government in the spring of 2015. That was just before Parliament adjourned ahead of dissolution for the 2015 election. The Harper government accepted the recommendations, and had the Conservatives been re-elected that fall, we would have had the opportunity to table the appropriate legislation to implement the Deschamps report.

Instead, we have had three entire parliaments during which the Liberal government failed to make this legislative change and implement the recommendation that Justice Deschamps made in March 2015. From 2015 to 2019, the government took exactly zero steps to implement the recommendation to address sexual misconduct in the armed forces. However, then minister Harjit Sajjan did take time to cover up the sexual misconduct of the then chief of the defence staff, Jonathan Vance, and during that Parliament, the government did take the time to engineer the frivolous and vexatious politically motivated prosecution of Vice-Admiral Mark Norman.

During the 42nd Parliament, the Liberals also expended no resources to try to deal with procuring important equipment. They did spend time, though, buying rusted-out Australian F-18s while delaying a decision to replace our own fighter jet fleet. They squandered the entire four-year majority Parliament without addressing sexual misconduct in the military or making progress in procuring ships, jets, other aircraft, submarines, land vehicles, artillery, ammunition and base housing.

Then from 2019 to 2021, the Liberals continued to ignore victims of sexual misconduct, although the resignations of senior officers piled up during that Parliament. They continued to delay procurement, as worsening morale began to foment a crisis of recruitment and retention that would start to jeopardize Canada's force posture and readiness to respond to requests from allies on the eve

of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and respond to China's explicit challenges to Canada's Arctic sovereignty and security.

Then in the last Parliament, between 2021 and 2025, Canada's lack of military preparedness became undeniable and unignorable. In 2023, it became known that there were 16,000 vacant positions in the Canadian Armed Forces and that another 10,000 force members were undertrained and undeployable. It was what kept then chief of the defence staff Wayne Eyre awake at night, according to his own committee testimony.

In 2023, after eight years of neglecting and ignoring the armed forces, other than the occasional morale-sapping pronouncement lamenting military culture, the Liberals finally tabled Bill C-66 but did nothing to advance it for an entire year. They finally introduced it in the House of Commons in the spring of 2024, and as my colleague from Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke pointed out, in the fall of 2024, they spent their entire legislative agenda avoiding compliance with an order of this House and not advancing this legislation.

Let there be no doubt about the government's lack of seriousness about the Canadian Armed Forces in general and the problem of sexual misconduct in the military specifically. Its track record over the past 10 years speaks for itself.

• (1640)

Right now, as I speak in this chamber, ships are rusting out at sea. Fighter jets that should have been ordered and delivered by now have still not been delivered. We would be lucky right now if we could get one submarine in the water for a handful of days per year, and there is no replacement ordered. We have only a handful of operational tanks, barely any available for training. We do not have air defence systems. New transport and refuelling aircraft have been ordered with no plan, no hangars built to house them and no base location decisions made.

Howitzers and artillery pieces are entirely lacking, as well as adequate shells. The government let a production line of artillery shells mothball in an emerging threat environment, and now, as Canada and its allies desperately need this ammunition, we do not have the production capacity. We do not have the production capacity to supply ourselves and our allies with desperately needed 155-millimetre artillery shells. That is a World War I munition, the production of which the government partially shut down on the eve of the Ukraine war.

*Government Orders*

Base housing is in a deplorable condition, with houses falling apart and a 7,000-unit backlog of personnel waiting to access base housing. Barracks are in horrific unsanitary conditions. Health care is also lacking for many military families. This bill would address a well-known and well-documented problem with sexual misconduct in the military, which is a factor in the recruitment and retention crisis we face and a factor in morale at a time when we desperately need to fill vacancies for almost every single position in all branches of the Canadian Armed Forces.

As I have said before, let me say something about the men and women in our armed forces. They are among the very best people in this country. I have travelled and visited foreign bases of operations in Latvia and England, and these people are the best. They are extremely young people with extraordinary responsibilities. I met a 19-year-old in Latvia who was responsible for training and helping allied soldiers. He was a kid from northern British Columbia with enormous responsibility, and he was so positive and full of energy and enthusiasm for his work.

These are incredible people, and they deserve our support. They are the best, and they deserve protection. They deserve access to justice when sexual misconduct happens.

We have already heard in debate a lot about culture and culture change in the military. Part of the culture change that needs to happen is overcoming the culture of secrecy and the culture of cover-up. That culture has permeated to the very top levels. We saw the former minister of national defence covering up the sexual misconduct of the former chief of the defence staff. We have seen this type of behaviour at the highest levels, and we see it at the unit level, as my colleague said earlier today.

We have had testimony at the defence committee from victims of sexual assault who say they cannot access justice because of the lack of access to the civilian system, which this bill would ultimately change, and because of the inability to get information about themselves to file a complaint. The reflexive secrecy around even members of the Canadian Armed Forces accessing their own information is part of the problem. This bill would not fix that, so there is a long way to go to ensure justice for members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are victims of sexual misconduct.

It is not like civilian access to justice for sexual assault victims is assured. It is far from it. We see over and over again how repeat violent offenders are automatically granted bail as a result of the Liberals' so-called bail reforms of Bill C-75, and earlier this afternoon this very Liberal bench voted entirely against replacing and repealing that law.

We have seen under the current government an erosion of effective law enforcement and justice for victims. We see crime levels that we have not seen in decades. We see an acceleration in crime. We see a lack of urgency in appointing judges so that assault victims can get access to trial, and this bill would not fix all of these problems. This bill contains an important long-standing 10-year-old recommendation, and I hope this Parliament will debate this bill and that we will have a proper debate so we can come to the bottom of this and conclude it.

• (1645)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to address some of the issues the member talked about that were outside of the legislation. For the very first time in generations, we have a newly elected Prime Minister who is committed to 2% of GDP. Let us compare that to either the former government or the Harper government. The Harper government was one of the largest disgraces in terms of commitments to our military in generations, and that is a fact; we cannot change history.

In regard to Bill C-11, I would suggest that the member take a look at the 48 recommendations. Forty-seven of them are on the way to being finished this year, with legislation on transferring complaints from military courts to civil courts being the one we want to pass. It is the Conservatives who continuously stand in the road to stop us from making that the law of the land.

**Pat Kelly:** Mr. Speaker, it is amazing. On the very first day of debate, the member is saying that a Conservative is delaying passage because we wish to debate a bill. There is a lot to unpack in that intervention.

I will point out to the member that the previous government, which was the Harper government, procured what was necessary for our troops and armed forces at a time when they were at war. They needed new helicopters; they got the helicopters. They needed transport aircraft; they got it. The current government, which has been in power for 10 years, has entirely neglected the armed forces and neglected the problem of sexual misconduct in the armed forces.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

**Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, why does my colleague think the government took so long to introduce this bill? Yes, there was Bill C-66, but it died on the Order Paper.

The government has known for 10 years that it needed to act quickly, but it failed to do so. As for General Vance, there were allegations even under the Conservatives. Members will recall that the Liberal defence minister refused 12 times to meet with the ombudsman, who asked to meet with him on this issue so that action could be taken and legislation could be passed. The minister refused to even look at any evidence.

Could my hon. colleague share his thoughts on that?

[*English*]

**Pat Kelly:** Mr. Speaker, I have no answer for the member's question, which was why the government spent 10 years ignoring the problem. That would be a question for the government.

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The member is absolutely right. The Liberals had 10 years. They have been in office for 10 years, and it took them eight years to even table this bill. Then they did not call it for a year, so it was not debated. It was moved and we had maybe one day of debate, and then the Liberals spent six months of House time avoiding an order of Parliament, during which time the bill could have been called and debated. The member is absolutely right to point out that the government has had 10 years to do this and it has failed.

**James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his great speech today laying out all the problems and laying out why we do not trust the Liberal government and why Canadians do not trust it either to deliver for our Canadian Armed Forces.

The member used to sit on the defence committee, and we sat there and watched the Liberals try not to let the committee study why Harjit Sajjan, Jonathan Vance, Justin Trudeau, Katie Telford and Zita Astravas covered up Jonathan Vance's sexual misconduct against another serving member of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I would ask the member to speak to why the Liberals would cover this up rather than deal with it, waiting 10 years to finally come forward with a bill.

**Pat Kelly:** Mr. Speaker, again, that is a great question, and it is one that I cannot answer. That is a question for the government. Why did the Liberals wait so long to implement this recommendation?

The very fact that the government, including the former prime minister and minister, spent all of the resources that it did trying to cover up sexual misconduct in the armed forces says everything that one needs to know about how seriously the Liberals took the problem at the time. Even after that episode, it was years before they tabled the bill that would implement the transfer of complaints to civilian courts. It took them way too long, and I do not think they deserve any credit for having finally introduced this bill.

**Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Davenport.

It is both a privilege and a responsibility to rise in the House today to discuss a matter that affects not only the Canadian Armed Forces, but the very fabric of our democracy: Bill C-11, the military justice system modernization act. As chair of the national defence committee, I am acutely aware of the critical work being done to ensure that our military and our military justice system are modern, accountable and aligned with the values of Canadian society.

As we make major investments in Canada's national defence, we must not lose sight of the brave men and women in the armed forces and their needs. We have heard from members that they need a modern military justice system to support them, and that is why the changes proposed in Bill C-11 are so crucial. They represent a significant and meaningful shift in how we view military justice. It is one that underscores the importance of culture change within the Canadian Armed Forces.

For those who do not know me, before I was elected to serve in this House, I had the privilege of working in many sectors of the government and public service where I have seen first-hand how important it is for systems to evolve. We cannot afford to be com-

placent. We must act decisively and without hesitation. That is exactly what this government has done by introducing Bill C-11.

This bill represents not just an update to legal processes, but a commitment to a new era of accountability and transparency within the Canadian Armed Forces. We are not living in an isolated, insular world. The global security environment is more volatile than it has been in decades. As our military faces increasing and complex challenges around the world, we must ensure that our women and men in uniform are prepared, resilient and, most importantly, supported.

One of the most crucial elements of Bill C-11 is ensuring that the military justice system reflects the values we hold as Canadians. These are values of fairness, accountability and respect for human dignity. That is why Bill C-11 includes recommendations from Justice Arbour and Justice Fish to modernize the justice system, focusing on greater transparency, enhanced support for victims and a more independent framework for addressing sexual misconduct.

A key provision of this bill is the removal of the Canadian Armed Forces' jurisdiction over Criminal Code sexual offences committed within Canada. This is a direct response to Justice Arbour's recommendation that military sexual misconduct cases be handled by civilian authorities. This reform would increase public trust in the military justice system and demonstrate to the world that Canada takes sexual misconduct seriously.

However, it is important to understand that this bill is not just about legal reform. It is about transforming military culture itself. Culture change is never easy, especially in an institution like the Canadian Armed Forces, but it is absolutely essential. As we move forward with Bill C-11, we must ensure that the CAF is a place where all members, regardless of gender, rank or background, feel that they are not only safe, but also heard, respected and valued. This is about creating a safe, modern and 21st century workplace for our forces.

One of the most crucial aspects of this bill is the support it provides to survivors of sexual misconduct. The introduction of the victim's liaison officer program and expanded support services would ensure that survivors are not just heard but supported at every stage of their journey. Victims and survivors can also access the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre, SMSRC, for 24-7 free and confidential support. It does tremendous work and its staff have appeared before our committee to highlight some of the resources available to our armed forces.

This bill would put a renewed focus on improving oversight and accountability in military policing and strengthen the role of military judges in ensuring fairness in the justice system. These are all tangible steps toward building a culture of respect, fairness and trust.

• (1655)

Time and time again, members of the Canadian Armed Forces have cited the need for a modern military justice system where their concerns and cases can be brought forward and evaluated in a fair and transparent manner. To our members: we have heard them, and we are acting swiftly.

Bill C-11 represents an important step forward for the Canadian Armed Forces, and it is only the beginning. The reforms we are proposing today will lay the foundation for future changes. However, those changes will require continued dedication and co-operation from all levels of government, military leadership and the defence team.

As we move forward with these reforms, we must remain committed to the work that still lies ahead. The cultural changes needed within CAF will require ongoing attention, investment and accountability, but with Bill C-11, we are taking a decisive step in the right direction, based on independent and expert recommendations. The time has come for us, and indeed all Canadians, to support transformative measures for the Canadian Armed Forces. I urge all of my colleagues to support Bill C-11 and the vision of a stronger, safer, more inclusive Canadian Armed Forces.

• (1700)

**Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is just a bit shocking, the conversation coming from the Liberal side about how they are moving swiftly and the Conservatives are responsible for delays when, in fact, that member sits with several rows of MPs who were part of a team that prorogued Parliament to avoid taking any credible action on this issue after months of filibustering prior to that.

I wonder how that member can square the circle of sitting with members who actually prorogued Parliament to avoid taking any real action on this issue, while claiming they are acting swiftly to get something done.

**Charles Sousa:** Mr. Speaker, a lot of filibustering was happening in the previous session, a lot of delays, a lot of activity that obstructed government from doing its job. The member opposite is now talking about some partisan issues, recognizing full well that he himself wanted an election, and he lost because people supported the Liberal Party going forward and they are supporting our actions to support our military. When the Conservatives were in pow-

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er, it was under 1% of GDP. We are strengthening the forces. We are investing in our people, and we are making every effort for them to be safe in our judicial system as well.

[*Translation*]

**Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, does my colleague agree that the government has really taken too long to introduce this bill or its previous version, Bill C-66?

Members will recall that, when the scandal broke, the Liberal government decided to appoint Justice Louise Arbour to make the military justice system independent of the chain of command. That was six years after the Deschamps report, which made the very same recommendation.

According to the Toronto Star, when Louise Arbour was called, she wanted to know if she was seriously being asked to do this work that had already been done. The Arbour report was tabled in May 2022, and there was also the report by Mr. Morris Fish.

Why delay the passage of such a bill for 10 years?

**Charles Sousa:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question.

I do not understand why you seem apprehensive.

[*English*]

There is no more time to waste. Let us support Bill C-11 now.

[*Translation*]

**Jean-Denis Garon:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I would like to remind my hon. colleague that he is to address the Chair, not his colleagues.

[*English*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** This is a reminder to all colleagues to speak through the Chair.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate many of the words my colleague has put on the record. One of the things I want to recognize is Bill C-11 comes out of recommendation number five. Recommendation five says we need to take the issue and put it into our civil judicial system, as opposed to the military system. For the last number of years, the government and the military have already moved in that direction, but passing this law will enable us to meet the 48 recommendations that were advanced by Justice Arbour.

I am wondering if he can just provide his thoughts on achieving those 48 recommendations.

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**Charles Sousa:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to reflect on the very nature of why this bill is important. As noted, there have been expert independent recommendations made by two justices recognizing its importance. One of the major priorities is the civilian enablement of the justice system to have more independence and protection for our armed forces and the individuals involved. All of us agree with that. I believe the opposition agrees with it as well. Let us support Bill C-11.

**Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this legislation is long overdue, and I believe the Minister of National Defence himself admitted this today. One of the most important issues for any military is maintaining discipline and readiness.

By shifting more offences to the civilian system, which is already overburdened as it is, how will the government maintain the swift discipline and operational effectiveness necessary to military service? How is the government going to strike a balance between justice for victims and the chain of command's need for operational order?

• (1705)

**Charles Sousa:** Mr. Speaker, having visited Latvia and Estonia, having gone to our bases in the U.K. and having been recently in Petawawa during military exercises, I was able to meet and talk first-hand with some of the soldiers and men and women on the front lines. Believe me, the soldiers, officers and leaders want discipline, but they want fairness and transparency and for their troops to be cared for. They recognize the civilian system is an appropriate step forward.

**Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is always such a pleasure for me to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the constituents of my amazing downtown west Toronto riding of Davenport.

Today I am speaking in favour of Bill C-11, an act to amend the National Defence Act and other acts. The legislation, if passed, would amend the National Defence Act in response to long-standing concerns raised by victims and survivors of the Canadian Armed Forces community. It includes a suite of targeted amendments to modernize the military justice system and build on supports to victims and survivors.

In my role as the chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, I know first-hand the impact that our brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces have on operations at home and abroad. We know that to fulfill our role as a NATO ally, we must have forces that are ready, able and agile. This all starts by ensuring that we provide our forces with a safe and professional work environment. This is the most effective way for our forces to train and to build up their skills for the difficult jobs we ask of them. This is why I am so pleased to rise today to speak about the important work that is being done to modernize our military justice system and to restore trust in the Canadian Armed Forces, also known as the CAF.

In the spirit of the debate, I will focus mainly on the initiatives surrounding Canadian Armed Forces personnel, including our military's efforts to recruit and retain more people and to ensure that their work environment is one that is free from discrimination and harassment.

Let me be clear from the start: Our people remain at the heart of everything our military does. It is, of course, vitally important they have the right equipment to stay agile and effective on the battlefields of the 21st century, but it is the people across the institution who make everything possible. Having the right number of people in the right jobs, each of them contributing to the collective efforts of moving our organization forward, has only become more important in recent years.

We have seen the return of strategic competition on a global scale, with authoritarian leaders from around the world vying for power and influence. They are not afraid to violate international laws and norms in the process. Canadians see this and know this. They see Canada on the world stage, with folks wearing the maple leaf proudly on their uniform around the world.

Here in Canada, Canadians have also seen the Canadian Armed Forces members called on more and more to respond in their own communities when natural disasters strike. As our military continues with its digital transformation efforts, and as we begin to account for the influence of emerging technologies like AI and quantum computing, we remain committed to keeping the human factor, the human decision-making and the human operational planning at the very heart of this work.

This is a time of rapid global change, change that puts our country and our continent at risk, change that threatens our closest allies and partners. Our efforts to build our forces back up to their full authorized capacity and set the groundwork for future growth are essential. When the Department of National Defence and the CAF were developing Canada's defence policy "Our North, Strong and Free", they recognized this fact. That is why the policy puts forward an ambitious plan to rebuild the Canadian Armed Forces' authorized forces strength of 71,500 regular force members and 30,000 primary reserve force members, as well as to lay the groundwork for future growth. It also commits to expanding the size of the civilian workforce across many different critical functions, from training to building infrastructure and from staffing to IT.

First and foremost, "Our North, Strong and Free" commits the Canadian Armed Forces to taking a more agile and adaptive approach to recruiting that includes using digital technology to improve the applicant experience, speed up the required screenings and connect with the new pools of applicants. It also includes innovative measures like a new probationary period for applicants, streamlining the security clearance process, re-evaluating medical eligibility requirements and abolishing outdated processes and criteria wherever possible.

The CAF is also modernizing training by optimizing new members' transition into service, streamlining training activities and providing new recruits with meaningful work more quickly and more effectively.

• (1710)

Through these efforts, they will also redouble their commitment to building a military that looks like Canada and draws on the skill and talent in all parts of our society. We know that having a military that accounts for and engages with the diverse perspectives and experiences of people across our country makes us stronger, more resilient and enables better decision-making.

The Canadian Armed Forces' recruiting efforts through the defence policy are broad and far-reaching, and this year we have hit the highest recruitment numbers in 10 years. That is great news. In addition to significantly boosting recruitment numbers across the country, the CAF is also looking at ways to make the military a viable lifelong career for those members already wearing the uniform. Key to this is modernising how the military manages its personnel, including providing improved career support and delivery of services by better incorporating digital technologies into these activities.

The Canadian Armed Forces is re-examining its policies around compensation and benefits, HR leave and other supports for work-life balance, some of which date back decades. As part of these efforts, the Canadian Armed Forces has accelerated the development of an electronic health record platform that improves the continuity of care for mental and physical health services for CAF members as they are posted across the country.

Our federal government has also created a Canadian Armed Forces housing strategy, improving access to housing wherever CAF members and their families are posted, including building new housing and rehabilitating existing developments. We are making generational investments in affordable child care for military families on bases right across the country, because we know that having safe, reliable child care is important for everyone. This includes CAF members, many of whom face difficulties in finding this kind of care when they deploy. Services like these are obviously essential for them and for their loved ones.

Our efforts in recruitment and retention also closely align with our military's larger culture change efforts. Through "Our North, Strong and Free", the CAF has re-affirmed its commitment to continuing the important work of building a safer, more respectful and inclusive work environment for all those who serve.

The legislative changes to the National Defence Act through Bill C-11 would ensure that CAF members can have confidence in the military justice system, as well as continuing to implement recommendations drawn from four external reports. These include the "Independent External Comprehensive Review" and the "Third Independent Review of the National Defence Act", overseen by former Supreme Court justices, Justice Louise Arbour and Justice Morris J. Fish, respectively. I will let my colleagues discuss these reports, and how they are influencing our military's efforts, in more detail.

Through "Our North, Strong and Free", the Department of National Defence has also committed to spending billions of dollars acquiring new equipment and infrastructure to support CAF operations around the globe. Many of these investments are focused on bolstering the CAF's presence in the Arctic year-round. Securing the Arctic is an important component in the defence of NATO's

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western and northern flanks and directly supports broader NATO deterrence efforts.

Finally, "Our North, Strong and Free" re-affirms the CAF's critical role around the world, supporting our allies and partners in need. This includes Ukraine, which continues to fight for its very existence in the face of Russia's illegal and unjustified invasion. In the Indo-Pacific, where Canada is bolstering its military presence in support of our regional partners, we are also supporting our allies and partners in need, as well as, of course, in Latvia, where the CAF continues to lead forward land forces in defence of NATO's eastern flank.

As Canada makes a generational and historic series of investments in our national defence, we must never lose sight of the people who serve Canada and Canadians. The brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces are at the heart of Canada's national defence. CAF members are deploying in dangerous situations around the world to bring hope. CAF members are repairing and upgrading equipment so their counterparts can quickly and safely deploy.

Through Bill C-11, we would also be supporting our people by modernizing the military justice system, making sure it stays aligned with Canadian law and that it is responsive to the needs of our people in uniform.

• (1715)

**Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about many things related to international peace and security that were different from the bill, so my question will focus on those issues as opposed to the substance of Bill C-11.

The member spoke about the threat to international peace and security associated with Russia's genocidal invasion of Ukraine, and about the Canadian response. I am very concerned that the government chose to create waivers to titanium sanctions. It has a pattern of talking about sanctions and then creating big holes in those sanctions. We still have waivers to titanium sanctions in place that allow the import and use of Russian titanium, and we continue to have barriers to the export of oil and gas that could play a key role in displacing Russian gas exports.

I would like to know what the member's position is on these issues. Why, in particular, has the government put in place titanium sanction waivers to allow the Russian titanium industry to continue to benefit from trade with Canada?

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**Julie Dzerowicz:** Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate, because I do want to continue to focus on Bill C-11, that members of our Canadian Armed Forces are always going to be there, not only keep to Canada safe but also to make sure that we fulfill our role as a NATO ally. For us to be able to do so, our forces have to be ready, able and agile.

I hope the member opposite will support Bill C-11, because it would contribute to making sure we have a very strong and free Canadian Armed Forces that will make sure we are doing our part in the world as well.

[Translation]

**Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, looking beyond the sexual scandal and abuse of power highlighted in the 2015 Deschamps report, does my colleague not also find it scandalous that it took more than 10 years to draft legislation to address the culture of silence in the CAF?

[English]

**Julie Dzerowicz:** Mr. Speaker, change does take time. What is most important for me is that we have the bill right now in the House and that there is an opportunity for all the members of the House to ensure that we pass the bill. We have made considerable progress over the past several years to enact meaningful and durable cultural change in the Canadian Armed Forces. If we pass the bill, we will continue to make those changes.

[Translation]

**Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to tell us about the importance of supporting our soldiers overseas on missions outside Canada and, more importantly, of ensuring that our female soldiers can have confidence in the system that determines when there has been a breach of the rules against sexual misconduct in the CAF.

[English]

**Julie Dzerowicz:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his advocacy.

We have already made considerable progress over the last few years to enact meaningful and durable cultural change within the Canadian Armed Forces. I am pleased to let the House know that we have also provided support and resources for any of the survivors or victims. A key resource is the sexual misconduct support and resource centre, a centre that provides vital services, including a 24-7 support line, peer support services and independent legal services.

We know there is more to do. We are on it. That includes passing the bill.

**Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know about the balance, as in my riding, between the military, which is very important, and agriculture. I know the government purchased roughly 1,600 acres for an Arctic over the horizon radar system. There seems to be a clash. The municipality and the Simcoe Federation of Agriculture are not against the actual technology; what they are against is the site of up to 4,000 acres.

If it affects food security and there is going to be an appropriation of land, how will that play out against protection for our military?

● (1720)

**Julie Dzerowicz:** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Armed Forces is always there to keep Canada safe. It is our obligation as a government to ensure that it has the resources, tools and equipment to be able to do so.

The legislation that we are discussing today would help our Canadian Armed Forces build a more inclusive, respectful and safe workplace. It is important for everyone to pass it.

**Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

I am honoured to rise today to speak on behalf of the wonderful people of Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Today, I rise to speak to Bill C-11, legislation that proposes long overdue changes to the National Defence Act and related laws. Let us be clear, the bill did not emerge out of nowhere. The Liberals have had 10 years to tackle sexual misconduct in the military, and they chose not to.

Bill C-11 is in response to deeply troubling and at times heartbreaking failures within our military justice system, failures that have been well known and well documented for far too long. I commend the Minister of National Defence for finally introducing this legislation, but I must say that it comes too late for too many. Survivors of sexual misconduct in our Canadian Armed Forces have been waiting, some for years, for a justice system that hears them, respects them and protects them. Instead, they faced delay, deflection and denial.

For years, Parliament has been presented with irrefutable evidence, independent reviews, government reports, surveys and the voices of survivors all pointing to a military culture where not only is sexual misconduct alarmingly common but also justice is often watered down, delayed or even denied altogether. Professor Elaine Craig of Dalhousie University published a 2020 report revealing high rates of plea deals in military courts, deals that allowed perpetrators to sidestep serious convictions. Survivors seeing their cases diluted, dismissed and delayed have lost confidence not only in the process but also in the leadership. Who could blame them? They are not just afraid of legal outcomes. They fear career ruin, retaliation and ostracism if they step forward. In a system where justice is inconsistent, the silent message has been, “Don’t speak up. It’s not worth it.” We need to change that.

Bill C-11 aims to address some of these long-standing issues, and among the long-awaited provisions are the transferring of sexual offence cases from military courts to civilian jurisdiction when the incidents occur in Canada. This has been a long-awaited step towards impartiality, but we need to investigate further whether sending these cases to the civilian system, as many have been since 2021, will be successful given the severe backup in our civilian justice system.

The bill would also modernize appointments to key military legal positions, including the provost marshal, directors of prosecutions and defence counsel services. Conservatives have been pushing for many years to strengthen safeguards against interference, improving complaint processes and enhancing independence within the military justice system.

Importantly, the bill would also implement recommendations from the Arbour report, which has been mentioned quite a bit in the House today and was led by retired Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour. She did not mince words when she quoted that Canadians learned that “investigations were perfunctory, the victims were not believed and often they—not the perpetrators—were punished by senior officers”. That is not just a legal critique. It is a condemnation of a broken system, which has been going on for years, and the numbers confirm it.

According to Stats Canada's 2023 survey on sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, nearly 2,000 members of the regular force, about 3.5%, reported experiencing sexual assault in connection to their service. The rates were even higher among young members and indigenous service members. It is a troubling fact for so many reasons, including that we are having such a difficult and challenging time in recruitment.

● (1725)

We have known about these issues for more than a decade. The landmark Deschamps report in 2015, which is also mentioned here, sounded the alarm that victims feared reprisals or removal from their units and had concerns about not being believed or being stigmatized as troublemakers. The culture of silence still exists. It is the result of a systemic failure to build trust.

Since then, the warnings continued and have been ignored by the Liberal government in the last decade. We have seen the 2018 Auditor General's report, the 2021 Fish report, a 2021 status of women committee report, a 2021 ombudsman report and, finally, the 2022 Arbour report. It is clear it is time to transfer these cases to civilian courts, reform the system and listen to the victims. This should have happened long ago. We also need to work on the civilian courts, as we know they have their own issues. It is not like the Liberals did not have all this information for the last decade.

Bill C-11 would give the current Minister of Defence increased powers over key appointments and prosecution guidelines. That is no small matter. Given the government's track record of interference, Canadians have every right to ask, and they are asking, if the minister and the government can be trusted with more power.

Let us not forget that in 2021, the House had to censure the former Liberal defence minister for his handling of known sexual misconduct allegations in the military. We witnessed Liberal cover-ups,

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committee filibusters and a failure to hold top officials accountable, even when the government knew about the serious misconduct at the highest level of military command.

Any expansion of ministerial authority must come with serious safeguards. The government must explain how it will prevent abuses, protect victims and guarantee independence in the military justice system. Our brave men and women in uniform make enormous sacrifices to protect us every day. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces deserve to know how these changes would apply to them, whether they serve here at home or are deployed abroad. They deserve a justice system that protects them in return.

Let us be clear. This legislation is not a gift and it is not charity, but the bare minimum of what we owe to those who serve. It should have happened years ago. We cannot afford another decade of inaction. We cannot offer more empty promises. We certainly cannot allow the government to pat itself on the back for action it was shamed into taking.

This is why Conservatives will scrutinize this bill closely. We will stand up for victims. We will demand transparency, independence and real reform. We will not let the government off the hook for its past failures, but work to ensure those in uniform finally get the justice and protection they deserve.

To all those who have served and continue to serve, we hear them, we stand with them, and we will fight for the justice they have been denied for far too long.

● (1730)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member can provide her thoughts with regard to the recommendations. There were 48 specific recommendations brought forward, and 47 of those are well under way, and hopefully, will in fact be dealt with before the end of the year. The one there is a lot of hesitancy about is Bill C-11. Bill C-11 is recommendation number 5, and it is what we are debating today. I will be able to provide more detail on it.

Would the member not agree that at the very least, the Conservative Party of Canada should commit to getting that legislation, in whatever form, passed before the end of the year?

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**Helena Konanz:** Mr. Speaker, it is really interesting to me that the Liberals and the member seem intent on pushing this through so fast when these issues have been around for years. In fact, last year, it was filibustered and debated in committee, yet it was killed when Parliament was prorogued.

The bill did not appear out of nowhere. It was in response to deeply troubling failures within our military justice system that have been going on for years. It is interesting that the member is interested in it going so quickly.

[Translation]

**Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in March 2015, and I would like to point out that we are in 2025, former Supreme Court justice Marie Deschamps tabled a scathing report on sexual abuse and allegations of sexual misconduct in the armed forces. A month later, the Harper government appointed Jonathan Vance as chief of the defence staff.

Then there was the Fish report, but the government was not satisfied with that report so it asked former Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour to produce a new report. Justice Arbour herself was surprised that she was being asked to redo work that had already been done. It is now 2025, and earlier I heard a Liberal member tell us that change takes time, and yet it took 10 years to introduce a bill to protect the most vulnerable members of our armed forces.

Does my colleague not find this to be a clear demonstration of the disregard for women, among others, in the Canadian Army?

[English]

**Helena Konanz:** Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with the member. It has been a long 10 years, with many people being hurt by the lack of legislation, which needed to come forward a long time ago. Survivors of sexual misconduct have been waiting for years for the Liberal government to do something about this, and they need to be heard.

**Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her excellent speech and for her important work in Parliament.

A former member of the House, who was, as it happens, from the same province, former defence minister Sajjan, was given an opportunity to receive some information about very serious issues of this nature from the ombudsman and tragically chose not to deal with that information at the time. I do not think we have heard anything from the Liberals thus far in today's debate about how that unfolded or contributed to where we are today on these issues.

I wonder if the hon. member has comments on what happened then and why action was not taken when information was initially available.

**Helena Konanz:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is pertinent to this debate because it exemplifies the fact that so many important and troubling issues have occurred in the last few years concerning this deeply troubling issue in the military system, which should have been acknowledged, moved on and changed a long time ago. Unfortunately, the Liberal government chose to avoid the issues that needed to be addressed.

• (1735)

**Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians hold deep pride in the men and women who wear the uniform of the Canadian Armed Forces. They serve in dangerous places with courage to defend the values and freedoms we hold dear. We ask them to put country before self, to risk their lives so that we can continue to live in safety and freedom. For far too long, too many of those who have served have had to fight another battle, the battle to be heard, to be believed and to be treated with dignity when they come forward as victims of sexual assault or misconduct within the very institution that demands the highest standards of honour and integrity.

That is why today's debate on Bill C-11, the government's new military justice reform bill, matters. Our conversation today is not just about amending sections of the National Defence Act. It is about the culture, credibility and future of the Canadian Armed Forces because of the way that Bill C-11 now intersects with our criminal justice system. It is also about the way we prosecute crime, in general, in Canada.

It has been more than a decade since the 2015 report of former Supreme Court justice Marie Deschamps rocked Canada with her findings on sexual misconduct in our armed forces. She made 10 recommendations. Operation Honour followed and was supposed to change both culture and outcomes, but years later, the Auditor General reported that Operation Honour had little measurable success. Investigations were still slow, accountability was still weak and the culture in some parts of the military continued to allow perpetrators to avoid serious consequences. Justice Deschamps called the Liberal government out for its failure to act in this regard.

The next report came in 2021. It was done by former Supreme Court of Canada justice Morris Fish. It gave the Liberal government another failing grade and made 107 recommendations. In 2022, former Supreme Court of Canada justice Louise Arbour delivered yet another comprehensive external review, this time with 48 recommendations, again emphasizing broken trust and calling for action.

Three former Supreme Court of Canada justices laid out a road map for reform, and yet, as the Liberals hesitated, as progress stalled, as survivors were left waiting, it was Conservative pressure through parliamentary questions, committee hearings and public advocacy that forced this issue back onto the national stage again and again. We can fairly say that without the sustained efforts and tenacity of victims, Bill C-66, which still died on the Order Paper when the Liberal government prorogued last time, and now Bill C-11 may never have been introduced.

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The Liberals will now claim credit for these reforms, but it is Conservative MPs who ensured that the voices of victims were not forgotten and that meaningful change could not be avoided. The fact that we are still here 10 years after the Deschamps report debating the same issues with the same victims still waiting for change is a damning indictment of the Liberal government's ability to deliver results.

Even with all of this to work with, Bill C-11 still includes some very strange inconsistencies. Term lengths and reappointment rules differ across positions. The director of military prosecutions and the director of defence counsel services would serve seven-year terms with no reappointment, but the provost marshal, on the other hand, serves for four years and can be reappointed. There seems to be no clear rationale for these differences.

Similarly, giving the Minister of National Defence the power to issue prosecutorial guidelines in specific cases and giving the Governor in Council authority over appointments and removals, which is cabinet, opens the door, intentionally or not, to political interference. The minister's involvement in reviewing inquiries and authorizing acting appointments could compromise independence and Bill C-11 does not fully clarify how offences outside of Canada would be handled. I hope the Liberals will collaborate with Conservatives on these issues and others raised by my colleagues and that they will be ironed out as the bill progresses through our parliamentary system.

● (1740)

Beyond the wording of the bill, however, we cannot ignore the context in which this debate takes place. The government has promised to grow the Canadian Armed Forces to meet our NATO obligations. It has pledged to recruit and retain thousands of new members in the coming years. That will require trust that every person who joins our forces will serve in an institution that protects them, upholds the law and embodies the values that we defend abroad.

That brings me to a very serious concern. The government is proposing to transfer all sexual offence cases from the military justice system to civilian courts. The principle makes sense: Justice must be independent. However, modernization is not just a word; it is a commitment to follow through. It means resourcing reforms properly. It means ensuring civilian authorities are ready to handle the additional caseloads. Right now, our civilian court system is in crisis. Court backlogs are staggering. Serious criminal cases have been stayed or dismissed because of delays. Victims of assault, including sexual assault, are waiting years for their day in court. Therefore, when the government says it will hand military cases to the civilian system, we have to ask how the civilian system would cope. What additional resources would be provided to the provinces along with this downloading to ensure these cases and others do not end up stayed for delay?

While we are speaking about justice, let us talk about the need to reform Liberal bail. Just this afternoon, the Liberal government voted down a Conservative private member's bill that would have tightened bail provisions for repeat violent offenders, including sexual offences. These are people who, under the current government's lax laws, have been released time and time again and have

shown a staggering ability to reoffend. The Liberals talk about protecting victims, but when they had the chance to take common-sense steps to keep dangerous criminals off our streets, they said no to reform and yes to Liberal bail, which would apply to these cases under Bill C-11 the same way it applies to other cases in our justice system.

Canadians deserve a government that takes justice seriously. Our men and women in uniform deserve a military where justice is not only done but is seen to be done and is done expeditiously. The integrity of our justice system, civilian and military, depends on consistency. The Liberals cannot claim to stand for victims in uniform if they turn their back on victims in our communities. They cannot say that they believe in accountability for the forces if they do not demand it in our courts.

The government has to move beyond symbolism and performative legislation. It must demonstrate through action and results that it understands the gravity of the trust that it has broken and the responsibility it carries to restore it. If we fail to get this right, then we fail not only today's soldiers, sailors and aviators, but also those we hope will serve tomorrow.

Canada is vulnerable. Our allies are increasing their defence commitments. The global security environment is becoming more dangerous. We will ask more of our military in the years ahead. Leadership begins with integrity at home. Before we can ask our soldiers to defend Canada's values overseas, we must prove that those values govern our own institutions. The rule of law, equality and justice must not be words in a report, but living principles in every part of our justice system.

For the sake of our soldiers, sailors and aviators serving in Canada and abroad, let us get it right. The time for excuses has long passed. Fix the criminal system, or get out of the way and let us do it. Let us ensure that the civilian courts have the capacity to deliver justice quickly and fairly. Above all, let us commit across party lines that never again will the men and women who serve Canada have to wonder whether their own government will stand up for them when they need it most.

● (1745)

**Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member talked a lot about the Liberal government's track record when it came to supporting the Canadian Armed Forces. We know the legislation we are debating today is significant, as well as some of the investments we have announced over the past few months.

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What does the member have to say about the fact that the lowest level of defence spending ever, in the history of the Government of Canada, was made under the Conservative Harper government?

**Tamara Kronis:** Mr. Speaker, this bill is about the prosecution of serious criminal offences around sexual misconduct. The government has had 10 years and six months to bring this forward. We need to get it right and we need to work together to do that.

[*Translation*]

**Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, once again, this is an interesting and necessary bill, but we have to wonder why it took 10 years to introduce it. First, the Liberals requested so many reports that they virtually ran out of former Supreme Court justices to ask. They asked for a bunch of reports. Then they introduced a bill and let it die on the Order Paper.

It would be fair to ask whether the Liberals were simply not interested in military justice, because when the Canadian Forces ombudsman tried to meet with Minister Sajjan, not only did the minister refuse to meet with him, but he did everything but hide in washrooms and broom closets to avoid meeting with the ombudsman.

My question for my colleague is this. Why, for 10 years, were the Liberals so uninterested in military justice, which is so important to the most vulnerable people and members of our armed forces?

[*English*]

**Tamara Kronis:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question. I think he has raised a point that really needs to be addressed.

We have gotten to a point on this file where the trust is so low that we need to move these kinds of offences into the criminal justice system. I really cannot help but wonder what would have happened if the Liberal government had acted faster during the 10 years it had to do this. I wonder if we could have gotten to a point where members of our armed forces had an opportunity to work this out internally and were able to build that trust.

We cannot go back. We can only move forward, and for as long as this has taken, we hope the government will take our advice and continue to work on this bill.

**Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for an excellent speech. I think she clearly identified some of the issues and concerns she has with this legislation.

Earlier today, we had the Liberals vote against being tough on crime and instead, support their soft-on-crime approach by voting against the jail and not bail motion that Conservatives put forward. The member identified that she does not necessarily have confidence that victims of sexual violence and assault in the military will receive justice in our courts.

Does the member think that because of the Liberals' failure to pass legislation that is effective and brings justice to victims?

**Tamara Kronis:** Mr. Speaker, the problem is not as much with the courts as it is with the speed of justice that the government feels they need to pursue. When it comes to the issue of Liberal bail, they Liberals say they have been waiting for that, they are waiting

for this, they are waiting for a trade deal. They are waiting and waiting. Canadians are tired of waiting for the Liberals. They use lots of nice words, but it is time to act and it is time to move forward on so many files, including this one.

[*Translation*]

**Madeleine Chenette (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and to the Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. Considering the sense of urgency, considering its importance to the future and to the victims and considering the need to find solutions, is my colleague truly willing to work with us to find solutions quickly and get this bill passed?

• (1750)

[*English*]

**Tamara Kronis:** Mr. Speaker, we will see what the amendments are and what the process brings.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to such an important piece of legislation.

I have listened to the entire debate thus far on this legislation, and I must say that it is a little disappointing. All members of this House really need to recognize the essence of why we have Bill C-11 before us. I have heard many comments with regard to individuals. I have heard many comments with regard to members' opinions about what the government is or is not doing. I have heard a lot of misinformation being put on the record.

I had thought this legislation would be well received, and to such a degree that we would be talking more about the victims and why it is important that the House of Commons pass this legislation.

**An hon. member:** You had 10 years.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I was just heckled that we had 10 years, and I plan on addressing that head-on.

Hopefully we will see the official opposition at least acknowledge the reality, as opposed to trying to continue to mislead. That is what we have witnessed today. Individuals trying to follow the debate would have a false impression after listening to Conservative after Conservative stand up to speak. Some speeches I really enjoyed, especially certain aspects of the speeches, for example when members opposite stand up and talk about victims. That is truly why the government, for years now, has been moving forward on dealing with the recommendations. It is all about the victims.

I have had the opportunity, privilege and honour to serve in the Canadian military. I was an air traffic control assistant posted in Edmonton, and I had wonderful opportunities to serve in our forces for just over three years. Whether they are marching with World War II veterans or sitting in a tower in Lancaster Park, I have the deepest amount of respect for the men and women who have served in many different capacities.

In many ways, we are the envy of the world because of our Canadian Forces and the many contributions they have provided, whether through peacekeeping abroad, participating in protecting our freedoms and the rule of law, being in countries abroad during world wars, fighting the mighty Red River when it was flooding the city of Winnipeg, fighting forest fires or stepping up during the pandemic. As I know my colleagues have and as all of us should have, I have an immense amount of respect for the work done by the personnel who make up our Canadian Forces.

When I think about why this is an important piece of legislation, it provides a very strong message to members in the forces today. As much as we value and appreciate what they do for Canadians day in and day out, we too appreciate their need for certainty. We want changes so that every member of the Canadian Forces can feel safe in their environment.

I heard a number of members talk about specific files where there was sexual abuse or sexual harassment. We know that takes place. That is the reason we have had studies take place.

● (1755)

The number of recommendations from former chief justice Arbour was 48. Bill C-11 deals specifically with recommendation 5. I actually printed off all the recommendations. I want to read recommendation 5 so that people who are following the debate will get a really good understanding of why we have the legislation before us.

These 48 recommendations are recommendations that the government has been proactively working on, virtually from day one after they were brought into being. On budgetary expenditures, in the 2022 budget, I believe there was somewhere in the neighbourhood of close to \$100 million over a number of years that was actually allocated. On legislative actions, today we have Bill C-11 dealing with recommendation 5.

It is important to recognize, contrary to the misinformation coming from the other side, that the government has been taking action. Let there be absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the government has not only taken the issue seriously but is also taking specific actions to deal with it. The best example I could give is the fact that, as of right now, there is a very real chance that all 48 recommendations will be dealt with before the end of this year. The one that is causing the problem is one that I believe every member in the chamber actually supports, at least in principle.

I will read the actual recommendation from the former chief justice:

Criminal Code sexual offences should be removed from the jurisdiction of the CAF. They should be prosecuted exclusively in civilian criminal courts in all cases. Where the offence takes place in Canada, it should be investigated by civilian police forces at the earliest opportunity. Where the offence takes place outside of Canada, the [military police] may act in the first instance to safeguard evidence and

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commence an investigation, but should liaise with civilian law enforcement at the earliest possible opportunity.

That is the recommendation. It is the only recommendation that compels the government to bring in legislation. Ultimately, we did not wait for the legislation to appear before us. We actually took action within a year of the interim report to ensure that we had prosecutions and investigations taking place in a civilian setting. That is how important it was for us.

I do not recall any of the Conservatives pointing out that this is the case. Rather, they amplified that nothing has been done. In fact, hundreds have actually gone in that direction. The legislation is to put it into law permanently. That is the purpose of Bill C-11. It would then put us in full compliance with that particular recommendation.

Then we hear the Conservatives again trying to give the false impression that we are sitting on it and not respecting the principles of recommendation 5.

● (1800)

What is worse is that, if a political entity in the House has prevented the legislation from becoming law, it is the Conservative Party of Canada; the Conservatives just do not realize it. Seriously, do they not remember what was taking place last year? Do members remember when they were jumping up and down, demanding their privileges and points of order and saying they were going to shut down Parliament?

I remember the hours and days, going into weeks and weeks, when the Conservatives refused to get anything passed. Where was that caring attitude for the victims then? That was all tossed aside because the Conservatives were more interested in their own political fortunes than they were in the victims.

If we take a look at the legislation, it was actually introduced as Bill C-66 back in September of last year. They had the opportunity to provide comment on it. They did in part, but then they came up with that game because they were more interested in having an election. They will have to excuse me for not being overly sympathetic when they try to give the false impression that, as a government, we ignored the situation. Nothing could be further from the truth. At the end of the day, we had taken action to ensure that victims of sexual abuse and harassment within the military were going through the civil system. That is the fact, but they deny that.

Then, the Conservatives have the brevity to try to say that the Liberals are the reason the law itself has not been enacted.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** You may be able to heckle something across the way, but all you have to do is read Hansard.

Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is factually true and the Conservatives know that. Last year at this time, they were a destructive force on the floor of the House of Commons, refusing to let legislation pass, period, end of story. That was their attitude. It was a minority government back then too.

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At the end of the day, I appeal to the members, especially the new members, because I can appreciate that the new members were not here during the Conservative debacle to see the destructive force. I can say to those new members that we have an opportunity.

I can tell that every member who has spoken today, from all political entities, seems to be supporting the principles of Bill C-11.

**An hon. member:** Right, then sit down. Let's go.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** I will tell you what: If you agree to pass it, I will sit down right now.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect if I did that, the Conservatives would not be done talking. At the end of the day, if everyone supports the principle of the legislation, then why not let it go to committee? Why oppose it going to committee?

You had the chance last year and you blew it. You have another chance this year. If you want to give some credibility to some of the comments that Conservatives were putting on the record when they talked about the victims, at the very least, recognize—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Order.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George is rising on a point of order.

**Todd Doherty:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North has been here long enough. He knows he needs to be directing his comments through you, the Chair. He continues to answer and go through and say “you” and use those terms. I ask that he show respect to you, Mr. Speaker.

• (1805)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I think the member realized the error of his ways. There is a little back-and-forth going on right now, so I would encourage all members on both sides to remember to address their comments through the Chair and keep the heckling to a minimal dull roar, if possible.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that this might be the first time the member has actually had a valid point of order. I apologize for using the wrong wording, but the facts remain. At the end of the day, we can in fact send a very strong and powerful message on Bill C-11 by allowing the legislation to pass. Some of the members of the Conservatives are going to say, “Whoa, just wait a minute; we brought it in only today, and we have had only eight hours of debate on the bill.”

The Conservatives have a shadow minister dealing with justice who introduced a private member's bill, and he is arguing that it should be passed virtually instantly. Fortunately for him, because it is a private member's bill even though it would make substantial changes, there are going to be only two hours of debate for second reading. We have had three or four times that already. Then it is going to go to committee, where it is going to be timed, and then it will come back, and that is because it happens to be a private member's bill even though it is proposing to make profound changes to our judicial system.

If the political will is there, we all know that the legislation before us could go to committee. What is the advantage of its going to

committee now? I would suggest that by allowing the bill to go to committee, members opposite would be able to share their concerns and to look at potential amendments and propose them. If they have a substantial good idea, they should be able to convince other members to support it. After all, it can pass only if we get more than one political entity in the House in favour of it, so if they are really convinced on their arguments, or they want to have a good, thorough discussion at the committee stage, why hold off and why wait? They can tell me the justification.

I have had a Conservative member say that there is virtually no difference between Bill C-66 and the bill that is before us. The member could be right. I do not know all the details of it, but let me assume that the Conservative member was accurate in the statement he made. If that is the case, Bill C-66 was introduced in January 2024 or March 2024, so the Conservatives have had ample time to deal with what is within the legislation.

Surely to goodness, if the Conservatives have some amendments, they should be primed and ready to go. Once we get the bill out of committee, then it is back here in the House, and many members can speak once again to it, but let us at least get it to the committee stage so we can be in a position before the end of the year to actually pass the legislation and have it receive royal assent. Would that not be nice?

We have an opportunity to meet all 48 of the recommendations, and I would encourage my colleagues opposite, if they are genuine when they say they want to have further discussions and debates and look at possible amendments to the legislation, to allow it to get to that stage.

Having said all that, I want to provide a very quick comment in regard to the military overall, and the reason I want to do that is that many people kind of went off track in their discussions on it, even me possibly, to a certain degree, but when it comes to the military, our new Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence and the Liberal caucus have done an incredible job of ensuring that we are going to be able to achieve the 2%, a commitment the Prime Minister has made. I know it would make a difference, but when we talk about victims, or about military expenditures and the many things we are doing for the members who serve in our forces, we know we can always do better, and we will strive to do that.

• (1810)

However, let us at least acknowledge that, at the end of the day, since having a new Prime Minister, the file on the Canadian Forces has been moving forward, second to no other prime minister in the last 40 to 50 years. I believe the Prime Minister will continue to ensure that the men and women of the Canadian Forces are being looked after in every way, which includes seeing Bill C-11 become the law of the land.

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**Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary said this debate is all about the victims, and one of the victims was navy Lieutenant Patrick White, who testified before the defence committee last year about the navy leadership's attempts, under the Liberal government, to cover up the sexual assault committed against him by Officer X. Today, we learned that the witness and victim, Patrick White, has been fired by the military. He was supposed to be protected by parliamentary privilege as a witness.

If the government cannot protect witnesses with the full power of Parliament, how can we trust the government that the legislation will prevent sexual misconduct instead of just covering it up?

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I will not go into any details on specific files, but I think it is safe to say that shifting the responsibility from military court procedures to civilian control is a very strong positive, and that is what this legislation would do. It is based on recommendation 5 of Madam Arbour's 48 recommendations.

I hope that members of the forces and other interested people following the debate will recognize that not only are we trying to advance legislation, but we have ensured that certain actions have taken place for a number of years to protect victims.

[*Translation*]

**Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure that my colleague from Winnipeg North would agree with me that, in an organization as hierarchical as the Canadian Armed Forces, we cannot allow a code of silence to hide sexual abuse or discrimination, or allow it to exist at the highest levels of the armed forces. We cannot have a system where those responsible for judging it are part of it, and military justice clearly failed miserably in this case.

To reassure my colleague, I want him to know that the Bloc Québécois supports the bill and will work in committee.

[*English*]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I recognize that the Bloc has been very supportive of the legislation. I would suggest that Bloc members being as candid about the legislation as they have been sends a very strong message in favour of protecting victims. I appreciate and respect that.

We need to look at ways to possibly enhance the legislation. One thing I have heard from Bloc members is that they have some reservations, so I look forward to seeing the bill go to committee and providing Bloc members and others the opportunity to make changes that would give the legislation more strength.

**Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for many years, Canada has opened the doors for women to be part of the Canadian Armed Forces, but unfortunately, they have not had justice when they faced sexual discrimination or sexual misconduct.

Bill C-11 offers an opportunity to take these particular issues out of the military justice system and into the civilian courts. Can the member talk about why that is an important development and how it would make sure that victims of sexual assault and sexual misconduct have an opportunity to have their case heard fairly?

• (1815)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the forces and the military should not be evaluating their own bad behaviour. I appreciate the member's comments. Back in the early 1980s when I was serving, there was a certain mentality there, but I believe it has improved dramatically since those days.

I can honestly say that when we pass legislation of this nature, it sends an even stronger message to young women, minorities and all members of the forces so they know they have the backing of the government, because it provides clarity. The more we can provide clarity, the healthier our forces will be.

**Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I take this very seriously. I believe the member for Winnipeg North is a veteran, so I understand he has skin in the game, too, and takes it seriously as well.

For the last 10 years, I have been here, working respectively across all party lines. We know the government filibustered the defence committee for three months. We know the Prime Minister's Office covered up the investigation on former minister of national defence Harjit Sajjan.

How, for 10 years, have they allowed this injustice for the victims of sexual assault to go on? The member says they have been doing something, but we know they have not been, because we have heard it. We heard it first-hand from the victims of sexual assault, those who are still enlisted and those who have left the service because of the trauma caused by MST.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, this is what I mean about false impressions, because if we were to listen to what the member just finished saying, one would be of the opinion that nothing has been taking place. For example, I can recall, I believe it was Bill C-77, where we had the declaration of victims rights. I can remember speaking to that bill years ago. This was a Liberal government initiative.

I have talked endlessly today about Bill C-11, and how it is one of 48 recommendations. Out of those 48 recommendations, we are hoping to achieve 47 of them before the end of this year. If the Conservatives were to get on side, we could do 48, but only if we can pass Bill C-11.

**Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we know Canadians' trust on this subject and in the government has been deeply eroded, especially given what has happened over the last 10 years. As someone who spent nearly three decades in policing, I know accountability is not about changing titles. It is about having and enforcing proper oversight.

How does this bill ensure military prosecutors and police are not only independent on paper, but also in practice, free from command influence or retaliation?

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**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the legislation and the actions we have taken in the last number of years has ensured victims of sexual abuse or harassment are going through the civilian system today. It is the law enforcement agencies.

For example, and I use this as a hypothetical example, if there were an issue that arose in the city of Winnipeg, I suspect it might be the City of Winnipeg police that would do the investigating, and it would be then the province that would do the prosecuting. I know there are some discrepancies, because it still all needs to be worked out, but this is already happening today, at least in part. It is about having faith and confidence in our judicial system.

**Sima Acan (Oakville West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to get my colleague's perspective on today's debate.

Why does he think some Conservative members are framing this in partisan terms, blaming the Liberals for prorogation of Parliament and delaying Bill C-66, when they themselves were calling for an election? Given the importance of moving forward with the amended bill, especially improvements that could be done at the committee stage, do you believe we can work together to pass the bill and protect the victims?

• (1820)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Statements are to be made through the Chair.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the member is right. If we were to take a look at what was being said on the floor of the House of Commons last year, it would be very clear we could have passed Bill C-66. It did not pass and get royal assent because the Conservative Party had an agenda that was politically self-serving, as opposed to serving Canadians. This is the reality. I would debate that issue anytime, because that is the truth.

**Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill C-11, the military justice system modernization act.

I want to let you know that I will be splitting my time, should any remain, with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk.

First of all, I want to tell people what this bill does, if they are not aware. It is similar to Bill C-66 from the last Parliament with some language changes in English and French to fix some errors.

It essentially amends the National Defence Act to transfer the jurisdiction of offences of a sexual nature to civil authorities when the offence takes place in Canada, but it remains under the Canadian Armed Forces if it occurs outside of Canada.

The legislation incorporates recent amendments to the Sex Offender Information Registration Act and publication ban rules into the National Defence Act and tries to increase the independence of the people who are involved in these prosecutions and investigations from the chain of command.

It also identifies different levels of review, including the minister, to try to get greater accountability.

I want to say right up front that I am very happy to see this bill coming to the House; it is just a shame it has taken so long.

I have been here in the House since 2015. I can remember in 2015 when the first report, the Deschamps report, came out. Minister Sajjan sat on it for five years and did nothing to address the sexual misconduct that was rampant throughout the military. At that point in time, a light was shone on it.

We were doing a study in 2021, at the status of women committee, which I was chairing. I know there was a study done as well at the defence committee. However, this was at the time when General Vance had allegations of sexual misconduct against him and the PMO and Minister Sajjan knew about the allegations. Did they investigate him? Did they suspend him while they investigated? No. They gave him a \$50,000 raise. What did that say to the victims who were waiting for justice? They had been waiting for five years, since the Deschamps report, and then this broke. Then there was all the filibustering at the defence committee by the Liberal government. There was not that same problem at the status of women committee.

We had testimony after testimony from women who had experienced sexual violations, such as gang rape in the first eight weeks of being in the military. We heard horrific stories. They were hard to hear. It was really disheartening to know that all of the survivors did not believe anything would change in the military after all this time. It was disheartening to see the government demand another report and get the Arbour recommendations, then a year later demand a third report. It has been 10 years and now all of a sudden it seems to be in a total hurry. I think victims could be not blamed for thinking that it is virtue signalling. That is what we have seen from the government to this point.

That said, I want to talk about a couple of things.

First, I want to talk about the actual problems I see in this bill. Basically, when we look at the testimony that was heard, what was clear was when there were allegations of sexual misconduct, especially against a senior officer, the old boys' club would gather around and there was punishment given to the complainant. In some cases, if they were overseas, they were returned home as if they were discharged or demoted out of the situation. I am sure there was some good intention of protecting and not having the victim have to work day after day in the environment with the perpetrators, but obviously this is not an acceptable trauma-informed way of dealing with the situation.

I do not have a problem with moving the jurisdiction to the civil courts; however, what I would say is this. When I was on status of women, we heard testimony of sexual violations. About 40% of them do not even get a police report done. Of the 60% that get a police report done, only 5% of them make it to trial. Of the 5% that make it trial, only 1% ever get a conviction. Of the 1% that get a conviction, the penalty is measured in months of house arrest or community service compared to the trauma the victim has experienced.

• (1825)

While we can say that yes, it was the recommendation of all the reports that we transfer the issue out of the CAF and put it into the criminal court system, we have a problem in our criminal court system. We do not have enough judges. We do not have, in many cases, any penalties, and are letting repeat sexual violent offenders out on bail. We hear about it day after day. I have a pile of examples I could read.

Are the survivors of sexual misconduct in the military going to be better off if they have to go through the current court system? Many of the rapists are getting off on the Jordan principle, which says that if they wait a certain amount of time and there are not enough judges and they cannot hear their case, then they go free. That is not justice. That is one of the concerns I have. The legislation would not really fix the problem of making sure we deal with the problem and get justice for the victims.

The second thing I am concerned about is how the criminal courts and that legal process would interface with the military. How would they exchange information to co-operate in investigations and prosecutions? I see that there would not really be anything in place to allow them to share the information, and that is problematic.

The other thing is that international incidents that occur would still be investigated under the prior system under the Canadian Armed Forces. We heard testimony from people who served overseas and who were sexually assaulted, and the resolution there was not good, so not changing that would, again, not address the problem for the victims.

When it comes to looking at some of the other issues we have heard about, today under the military system, if somebody is accused, then the military covers the cost of the litigation for them. Therefore if there is a complaint that is not valid, and frivolous complaints can come forward, it can be very expensive. If we move all of that to the criminal courts, then the individual is on the hook for the expenses, whether the charge is a valid one or not. That is another area where the government should take a look at what it has put before the House and see whether there is a way of shoring that up so it can determine that if there is pernicious prosecution, the military can pay for it.

Another thing in the bill is that the government has created a whole bunch of new term limits, and they are not consistent across everyone. I believe that the intent is to make people more independent from the chain of command, which I support, but it is not clear to me why the terms are all different and why the government would put new roles in place. To me, it would create a lot of bureaucracy. If we look at the Liberal government and its record, this

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is what it does. If the Liberals want to solve a housing crisis, they create not just one bureaucracy; they are on number four. When it comes to defence procurement, the Liberals have decided the broken system would be fixed by putting a new defence procurement bureaucracy in place. It is the same for the major projects system, and I could go on.

There are still things we need to repair, and at the end of it all, it comes back to trust. The victims do not trust the current government, because it spent 10 years doing nothing, and they do not believe the Liberals now. I do not know why the Liberals think people would believe them until they see actual action and something put in place that would get victims the justice they need.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in getting the member's thoughts in regard to the 48 recommendations. We have been very clear throughout the day that 47 of them are well under way, and we are anticipating that we could have them complete before the end of the year. The recommendation that has a question mark on it is actually Bill C-11.

I wonder whether the member is in a position to provide some assurance to members of the forces and to others that, from her perspective, she would like Bill C-11 passed before the end of the year so we could unanimously say that all 48 recommendations have been complete.

• (1830)

**Marilyn Gladu:** Mr. Speaker, I do not have a lot of confidence that the amendments I have just gone over, which are all reasonable amendments, would be accepted at committee, based on the history that I have seen, where the Liberals continually turn down the common-sense amendments of the Conservatives. This is our only opportunity to air those concerns and get them in the public, but certainly we will support the bill's going to committee.

**Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent work. It is almost 10 years that we have been together in Parliament, and I think she has been involved in the work of the status of women committee for all or most of that time.

One observation I would have about this debate is that the Liberals are speaking a lot about the changes they are making to military justice, in particular, bringing this into a civilian context. However, this is also about a context in which we have a dramatic increase in violent crime across the board in this country. We are seeing more burden placed on our police officers and courts. This follows the application of a failed Liberal ideology to the justice system. One needs only to consult violent crime data to see that violent crime was going down prior to 2015 and started going up after 2015. It is not hard to identify what might have been a significant contributing factor to that change in trajectory.

Would the member have any thoughts on how the bill fits into the larger trajectory of events around violent crime in this country?

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**Marilyn Gladu:** Mr. Speaker, rape is up 76% in this country. We do not have enough judges. Rapists are walking on bail. Repeat offenders are walking on bail. As I have said, the conviction rate is slim to none.

We cannot move things from the military justice system to the criminal justice system unless the criminal justice system is fixed so that women and men who are sexually assaulted in Canada get justice.

**Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, those statistics are alarming, for example, that we continue to see a very low conviction rate. That is discouraging, no doubt, to those who have been victims and might be considering coming forward or in instances in which we have perpetrators who are repeatedly released on bail, even though they are repeat violent offenders.

We had an opportunity today to try to take some action on that, when the Conservatives put forward a constructive proposal through our opposition day motion to move forward the jail-not-bail private member's bill. The government is trying to create anticipation around a bill that has yet to come forward whereas we, as Conservatives, have already prepared a bill and put forward a solution. The Liberals voted against even advancing that to committee. Victims cannot wait any longer.

I wonder if the member would like to reflect on the results of that vote today and what message the Liberals' opposition to our constructive proposal sends to victims of crime.

**Marilyn Gladu:** Mr. Speaker, I have already outlined the fact that Canadians have lost trust in the Liberal government. This is just another fact. Obviously we need bail, not jail.

For six months, the justice minister has had an opportunity to introduce the things that would reverse what is in Bill C-75, which gives people bail. It talks about the least restrictive punishment at the earliest possible opportunity. That means fines and bail today. That is what is happening.

That is not justice. That is not going to make victims want to come forward, because going through the process of the investigation and the trial is very punishing to them. There is no evidence for how they are going to be protected by the Canadian military while this civil process is going on. Are they going to be protected in their jobs? Will they be exposed to their perpetrator? What will happen? What will be done to protect those people?

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

**Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always with great pride that I rise here in the House on behalf of the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk.

That is especially true when we are discussing our armed forces since the Valcartier military base is a just a few kilometres from my riding. It is very well represented by the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier. As with all members who have a military base in their area, there are hundreds, even thousands, of military personnel, former military personnel, and military families living in my riding.

We can be proud of our military, which shone with distinction when it was called upon around the world. It happened in World War I with the Battle of Vimy Ridge, in World War II with the tragedy of Dieppe and the Normandy landings, but also during the landings in Italy, in which my father participated with the very prestigious Royal 22nd Regiment.

Closer to home, there are all those who served in the war in Afghanistan. I want to remind everyone that Canadians died there, including a young man from Loretteville, close to where I was born. Corporal Jonathan Couturier died on September 17, 2009, when he was barely 23 years old. He served under our flag, and it is important that we remember that.

The Canadian military has had its moments of glory, but it has also had its share of trials and tribulations, like any organization. As with any organization, depending on the social situations in each era, there have been challenges to be faced. I remember very well that when I was about 10 years old, in the mid-1970s, a tragedy happened not far from my home in Loretteville. A soldier who no longer had his wits about him because he had drunk a little too much alcohol unfortunately killed some children. This incident brought a lot of attention to the problem of alcoholism in the Canadian Armed Forces. What did they do? They took the problem and dealt with it properly. They succeeded in significantly reducing that alcoholism that was rampant among members of our army in the 1970s.

Members will also remember the infamous and unfortunate scandal in the mid-1990s involving the Airborne Regiment, when Canadian soldiers in Somalia dishonoured our flag and their uniform by engaging in behaviour that was completely unacceptable. That is why the regiment was disbanded in 1995 by prime minister Jean Chrétien, as everyone likely remembers.

As I said, whenever challenges arise in the military, they must be addressed, and the Canadian military has always seized the opportunity to resolve difficult situations.

The current situation involves sexual misconduct in the Canadian military. Yes, that is the reality we have to deal with. That is why we are gathered here today to discuss Bill C-11, which directly addresses this concern about sexual misconduct in the Canadian military, particularly with regard to the chain of command and the utterly reprehensible incidents that have occurred in recent years.

Bill C-11 is reminiscent of Bill C-66 from the last Parliament. Essentially, when there are cases of sexual misconduct, the bill aims to have the judicial process take place in the civilian system and not in the military police system, under military law. In addition, the government would appoint the military leaders who are responsible for discipline.

Regrettably, the issue of sexual violence is not something new. The Canadian Forces and Canadians have been dealing with it for more than a decade. It was in 2014 that Stephen Harper's Conservative government tasked former Supreme Court justice Marie Deschamps with investigating the everyday reality of sexual violence in the Canadian Forces. One year later, Justice Deschamps tabled a scathing report that showed, unfortunately, in black and white, that sexual violence was a serious problem. About ten recommendations were made, which were adopted by the Harper government.

Then came the 2015 election and, unfortunately, a period of total darkness on the issue of sexual violence.

• (1840)

For years, under the Justin Trudeau government, neither its ministers nor its MPs chose to do the right thing. True, other inquiries were held, yet this only raises the question of why they were necessary, given that the evidence already confirmed the need for immediate action to solve the problem of sexual violence in our army.

For five years, the government was asleep at the wheel. It called for another inquiry by two different judges who each conducted their own inquiry, even though we all knew as far back as 2015 that action was needed. Still, the government did nothing. Obviously, what shocked everyone into action was the incident involving General Vance, Canada's top soldier. Here was a soldier who held the Canadian army's most powerful position, who was initially the focus of rumours, then allegations, then substantiated evidence and then a trial.

Why is it that, for all these years, nothing has been done? Why is it that this government, for 10 years, has done everything it can to cover up the affair? Why is it that, while this case was being studied by a parliamentary committee on April 12, 2021, the Liberal government, along with the Bloc Québécois, decided to put an end to the parliamentary inquiry? This was followed by many other developments that I will have the opportunity to discuss later, the next time this bill comes before the House.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

### TAXATION

**Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise to talk about a question I asked a couple of months ago. This was in my original question:

...Canada's fiscal watchdog confirms another broken Liberal promise, this time on the Liberals' tax cut. On the campaign trail, the Prime Minister promised Canadians an \$800 income tax cut, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer just confirmed that the average Canadian will save \$15 a month, and low-income seniors will save only \$10 a month....

That was definitely not the promise on the campaign trail.

We have seen the food bank usage across our country. Four million users were at the food bank in Toronto. I just saw a new report that said that since 2015, since the Liberal government took office,

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food bank usage in Canada is up by 142%. That is a staggering number.

All I hear time and again from the Liberals is that there is no hidden food tax, which is factually incorrect. There is. There is a tax on fertilizer. There is a tax on food packaging. There is a second carbon tax coming in. There is an industrial carbon tax. Only someone who has their head in the sand would not realize that this is going to increase the cost of food.

I grew up on a farm. A lot of my friends took over their family farms. I know that in Canada, one thing that our farmers are very proud of is that they are producing more with less. They are producing more of what goes into food with fewer acres of land, with less water and with less fuel because they have GPS and have great technologies. If farmers are producing more food with less, if there is no hidden tax and if the government is not putting in policies that make food more expensive, then we would think food bank usage would go down, not up.

I know that my friend from Whitby is going to answer this question, and it is a simple question. If food bank usage has gone up by 142% in the last 10 years, why is he telling Canadians that they have it so good?

**Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, obviously I have a difference of opinion with the member opposite. I know that food bank usage is something that has increased, but I also know that the members opposite have a horrible track record when it comes to actually standing up to support Canadians. They voted against feeding 400,000 hungry children with the national school food program, an investment of \$1 billion over five years to feed kids across the country, and I do not understand how Conservative members can stand up in the House to complain about food bank usage and then simultaneously, as those words come out of their mouths, on the same day get up to vote against feeding 400,000 hungry kids. It just does not make any sense.

Our government firmly believes that the measures we are taking will build the strongest economy in the G7 and bring down the cost of living. We heard that from the Governor of the Bank of Canada last week, who said that the government is on the right track and that we will boost productivity and real wages. The investments we are making to make everything more affordable are the only way.

Since we were elected in 2025, we have been focusing on delivering a plan to address the cost of living challenges that have eroded Canadians' quality of life. That means change that will put more money in the pockets of Canadians and change that builds a more affordable Canada.

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The government is well aware of the affordability challenges, and our hearts go out to people who are challenged and are struggling to make ends meet at the end of every month. That is exactly why we are doing the things we have been doing.

Rents have gone up. House prices have gone up. An entire generation of young Canadians has been questioning for some time how they can afford a place to live today and whether they will be able to afford a home of their own in the future. That is exactly why our government is taking immediate action to address this crisis. Key to the plan that we have put forward is bringing down costs so Canadians can keep more of their hard-earned paycheques and can spend them on what matters most to them.

We believe that the economy is only truly strong when it serves everyone, but we know that many Canadians are struggling to get ahead. That is why we have delivered a middle-class tax cut for 22 million Canadians. Math is math, and I know that opposition member has a hard time with it sometimes, but two-income families will save \$840 per year. That is not insignificant. I know members opposite balk at that and say it is only this amount per month, but families that are truly struggling actually need that \$840 back in their pockets.

We are also cutting GST for first-time homebuyers on homes under \$1 million. We know, from committee testimony this week, that 97% of new homes are under \$1 million. That is \$50,000 back in the pockets of first-time homebuyers that they do not have to spend to purchase their first homes. That enables families in my riding of Whitby, and families all across the country, that want to get into the housing market to make it that much easier.

Yes, we know it is hard, but that is exactly why we are putting in place measures that will help them. These are just a few measures. Obviously, this measure will continue to spur on more construction of new homes across Canada, which is key.

We have also obviously eliminated the consumer carbon price, a price that members opposite said, for over two years in the House, was responsible for food inflation. I do not know how they explain food inflation continuing to rise, when they said forever that that was the only cause of it.

• (1845)

**Warren Steinley:** Mr. Speaker, the member can yell all he wants and insult me, but it was not me who said the tax cut did not measure up. It was the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The member just said it was \$800. I will take the Parliamentary Budget Officer's word when he said people would get \$15 a month and low-income seniors would get \$10 a year.

The way the member is talking, everything is great. It is pretty easy to vote against a food program, because I believe, if tax payers pay less and the Liberals stop stealing their money, they would be able to feed their own kids, and that is what the people I represent want. They want the government to get out of their pockets.

The member talked about food price inflation. That member was a cheerleader for the carbon tax. He said it was the best thing in the world, then he flip-flopped so he would get re-elected. He really has no principles. Yes, the carbon tax was taken off, but then they had the industrial carbon tax. Then they had the second carbon tax

come in and called it the clean fuel standard, which will add 17¢ a litre by 2030. Then, they had the fertilizer tax, and they had the packaging tax, which all make food expensive. That is why Canadians cannot afford food at the grocery store anymore.

**Ryan Turnbull:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite likes to label everything as taxes and claim that there are hidden taxes. He almost sounds like a conspiracy theorist, but obviously Canadians know the truth, which is that there are no taxes on their food.

Food prices are a real challenge; we are not claiming that they are not, but what is hard to accept is that the member opposite votes against every affordability measure. He seems to forget how household budgets of fixed-income families actually work. If they save money on child care, save money on taxes, save money at the pump and save money on dental checkups for their kids, they have more money to spend on groceries. That is common sense. It is funny that common sense is not so common in the Conservative Party today.

It is great to be here tonight and correct the record. The member opposite says he has principles, but he does not follow through when it is time to stand up for Canadians.

• (1850)

FINANCE

**Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask a question concerning whether the Liberals have the courage to reverse the course of the financial crisis.

The member opposite talks a lot about food banks and income supports, but people, in general, do not want to have to use those things. They want to keep their paycheque, but they cannot keep their paycheque, as he mentioned, if they lose their job. Over 80,000 people have lost their job since the Prime Minister took office.

The Liberals and the member opposite have been talking a lot about tax cuts for a lot of Canadians since they have been in office, but we need to remember that someone cannot receive a tax cut if they do not have a job. Over 80,000 people have lost their job. The members opposite can talk about having food banks and dental services available, but people just want to take care of themselves. They want to be able to afford to put food on the table themselves by keeping their job.

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Last month, the Parliamentary Budget Officer revised Canada's economic outlook downward and delivered a warning we cannot afford to ignore. According to the PBO, our growing deficits are “alarming”, “stupefying”, “shocking” and “unsustainable”. I do not think he is making that up, and those are shocking statements. He said that while Canada has not gone over the edge, it is looking over the cliff.

With the Prime Minister, the Liberals have nearly doubled the deficit spending since March. This year's deficit is projected to be \$68 billion, far exceeding the \$40-billion ceiling Justin Trudeau promised last year, but instead of reversing course, the government has committed to even more spending, and ordinary Canadians are shouldering the cost.

In B.C., where my riding is, and throughout Canada, people are losing their job. Mills are closing because they are unable to secure a softwood lumber deal. People are losing their job, and I hope my colleague across the aisle will not talk about the Liberals' helping people as much as they can with services like food banks and that type of thing. That is great temporarily, but how are we going to give people their job and their dignity back in places like sawmills, where generations have worked yet they are now shutting their doors.

Canadian families are falling behind. Their paycheque buys less at the pump and at the grocery store, if they still have a paycheque. Generations of families who have worked at a certain place are losing their job. They do not want a handout; they want to keep their job. I know I have repeated that, but it seems like the Liberals do not understand. It is great to have safety nets, but let us keep businesses going by being fiscally responsible. The damage is not limited to one sector; when one industry falls in a small town, local economies suffer, small businesses suffer and the cycle deepens.

Will the Liberals have the courage to reverse course on the financial crisis?

• (1855)

**Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's question although I disagree with many of the premises of her argument, if it could be called an argument. I heard her talk about the importance of jobs. That is exactly what our government is focused on.

We did not ask for the trade war that we are in, which is obviously having a negative impact on our economy, but we have stepped up time and time again to support tariff-affected industries, whether it is steel and aluminum, automotive or lumber. For every single industry that has seen an impact, we have stepped up and offered liquidity support. We have offered a remissions framework. We have offered a \$5-billion fund to help SMEs pivot and adapt to the changing economy. We have offered re-skilling programs for any workers who are displaced. It goes on and on, in terms of the supports that we have offered.

We are the ones who have been standing up for our industries, all while we stimulate our economy and move forward with nation-building projects that are essential infrastructure to get goods to

market. We know exactly what is within our control, which is that the government can invest in and encourage private sector investment in the industries that Canada sees a strategic advantage in. That will create jobs for the future. That will help us get goods to market.

Simultaneously, our government is actively pursuing economic co-operation with many different countries around the world. We heard just recently that our Minister of International Trade secured a deal with Indonesia, which has an economy of a very significant size, almost double the size, I believe, of Canada's, with significant market access for many of our businesses. Again, that is just an example of one thing that our government has done to help.

The member opposite mentioned the PBO's comments. I thought maybe it would be good to review a few quotes from former PBO officers as of last weekend. Former PBO Kevin Page thinks, “If you put the deficit and debt in perspective, we are not in a bad place with respect to other countries. With respect to our credit rating, we are actually in a pretty good place.” That was a direct quote.

Another direct quote from Kevin Page is this: “I think the analysis that we've seen from finance, from the PBO and from the [International Monetary Fund] last year, is that Canada is fiscally sustainable.” Another quote from Kevin Page says, “Well, I think the language from the current Parliamentary Budget Officer, Mr. Jason Jacques, is just wrong, and he should walk that back, quite frankly. He should tell people that our fiscal situation is sustainable.”

How about another one from Kevin Page? He said, “I think it's definitely inflamed certain passions around Canada's fiscal situation that I think are not consistent with the numbers.” Another one from the former PBO is, “We're a AAA country, so like, where do you see ‘shocking’? It's not shocking to see a deficit go up, because the economy is slowing and we have NATO commitments. To me, it's sustainable.” Again, that is from the previous PBO.

Former PBO Yves Giroux said, “I would...personally...wait until we see what's in the budget before making such a statement...[because] we'll have a much better idea...on the evening of Nov. 4”.

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These are comments from two well-respected former PBOs that obviously conflict with those of the interim PBO, but it just goes to show members that there are many credible experts out there, including the Bank of Canada governor, who thinks that our fiscal plan and new fiscal budgeting framework are ways of stimulating the Canadian economy and creating a virtuous circle between investment and economic growth. That is going to create jobs.

**Helena Konanz:** Mr. Speaker, it sounds as if the member does not really trust the current PBO. It is interesting that he does not believe what our current PBO has stated. It is too bad, I guess, that former PBOs are much better experts than the person who is in that role right now.

I want to talk about a certain industry, the forestry industry. The member talked about how money was tagged for different industries. Let us talk about the forestry industry. I toured six mills through the summer. At each one, I asked how much money they had received from the government. They all need help; they are desperate. None of them has received a penny.

Can the member tell us how much any industry has received?

● (1900)

**Ryan Turnbull:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, a number of measures are in place providing support to tariff-impacted industries. Maybe the member opposite would do me the kind favour of supporting the constituents she mentioned by providing that information to them, all of which is publicly available.

I want to talk for a moment about fiscal management and the fact that our government is extremely responsible in managing and stewarding the country's resources. Today, we made an announcement about a budgetary cycle change. We will now move to having fall budgets and spring economic updates. This is a really great move to help give a lot more transparency to Parliament, but also to ensure that the stakeholders we rely upon and work in partnership with have more predictability and can invest in ways that help get the objectives and outcomes that Canadians deserve.

TAXATION

**Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the past two weeks, I have twice asked the government why there is still a 35% tariff on Russian fertilizer when it is clear that this is not causing a net decline in Russian exports, nor a fall in the price paid worldwide for Russian product.

The purpose of the tariff, when it was imposed in the spring of 2022, was to punish Russia for the invasion of Ukraine. That year, a total of \$115 million in tariff revenue was collected on fertilizer and fertilizer precursors, but because the contracts with Russian suppliers had already been signed and the fertilizer had already been loaded onto ships, the cost ended up being borne not by the Russians but by the Canadian farmers who were on the hook for these purchases. This debacle prompted one contemporary analyst to observe in December 2022, “Sanctions should be punitive. But for tariffs on fertilizers, there was no evidence that Russian companies were affected at all.”

By the start of 2023, Canadian agricultural organizations were calling for the tariff to be lifted, pointing out that Canada was alone among G7 nations in imposing tariffs on Russian fertilizer. I do not

see any evidence that our farmers are any less supportive of Ukraine than the rest of Canadians, but I think they wondered, quite reasonably, why in this country, unlike the rest of the world, farmers were being singled out to pay a vastly disproportionate share of the financial burden for supporting Ukraine.

Since 2023, direct Canadian imports of Russian fertilizer and fertilizer precursors like urea have largely dried up, but this has not had the hoped-for effect of driving down the total worldwide demand for Russian urea or monoammonium phosphate. Here is what has happened instead. Canada now imports about 50% of its urea and about 60% to 70% of its monoammonium phosphate from the United States, up significantly from four years ago. In the meantime, the U.S. has increased its own direct imports from Russia, making up the demand shortfall.

A position paper prepared earlier this year by the Grain Farmers of Ontario reports as follows on the implications of what I just described:

Granular, fertilizer grade urea is an indifferentiable commodity, meaning individual tons are very difficult (if not effectively impossible) to trace. The vast majority of US urea exports to Canada enter the country through inland border crossings, but that doesn't mean the urea received can't be a blend of imported Russian tons with domestically produced American tons.

The report goes on to observe that even when Russian product is not being transited to Canada via the U.S., the need to import from our southern neighbours hurts Canadian farmers and enriches American middlemen without actually reducing the net North American demand for Russian product. It states, “American companies are essentially able to benefit from both sides—importing cheap Russian urea and exporting expensive American urea.” It then says, “the Canadian farmer ends up being the one to foot the bill”.

If the foregoing is correct, why on earth are we retaining the tariff on Russian fertilizer and fertilizer precursors? Surely, Canadian farmers do not need to be further impoverished by a completely ineffective policy that does not make any difference at all to Russia or Ukraine.

● (1905)

**Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have had many good discussions with the member for Lanark—Frontenac in other committees we served on together for some time.

I would like start by reiterating our government's total support and commitment for Ukraine, a cause that, unfortunately, my Conservative colleagues across the way have chosen not to support. I watched them stand up in the House and vote against the interests of Ukraine on numerous occasions, which shocked and surprised me. Perhaps it should not be a surprise today that they seem to want to reverse course on sanctions and tariffs toward Russia.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, supported by Belarus, is a violation of international law and threat to the rules-based international order. Our government understands Ukraine is once again at the front line of the struggle for democracy and freedom, and at this critical time, Canada continues to be a steadfast ally in Ukraine's relentless pursuit of freedom.

I remember getting to meet President Zelenskyy and actually shaking his hand, and I reiterated to him that we would never stand down, that we would always be there to support Ukraine. It is unfortunate; I watched my Conservative colleagues have a change of heart in the House of Commons in the past Parliament.

Just last week, our colleague, the Minister of Finance and National Revenue, chaired a virtual meeting, during which G7 finance ministers agreed to bolster coordinated measures to increase pressure on Russia to end its brutal war of aggression against Ukraine.

I am proud to say that since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, Canada has committed nearly \$22 billion in multi-faceted assistance for Ukraine, including over \$12.4 billion in direct financial support. That is the largest per capita direct financial contribution among G7 countries. This is one of the ways we are supporting Ukraine and its ongoing efforts to defend itself from Russia.

Canada took immediate action to ensure countries that violate the rules-based international order cannot economically benefit from it. That is why in March 2022 Canada withdrew on a temporary basis the most favoured nation status for tariff treatment of imports from Russia and Belarus. Since that time, the general tariff of 35% has applied on virtually all imports from these countries.

The government moved forward to make this change permanent, as announced in budget 2023 and enacted in June 2023. This permanent withdrawal reflects the enduring nature of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, with support from Belarus.

It is important for the Government of Canada to send a signal to Canadian importers to incentivize sourcing away from these two countries. To reiterate, the general tariff of 35% continues to apply to virtually all imports from Russia and Belarus, including imports of fertilizers.

As such, I would like to note there have been no commercial imports of Russian fertilizer since June 2022. That, to me, speaks of the effectiveness of this measure. This means Canadian importers have indeed moved away from Russia to alternative sources of supply.

**Scott Reid:** Mr. Speaker, of course my hon. colleague has no specialized expertise in agriculture and is reading prepared remarks, which ignore everything I just said about how Russian supply still comes via the U.S. and an upcharge occurs. North American demand remains the same and prices remain high. This is a completely futile policy.

I want to take a moment, though, to make another point. I am so sick of hearing these self-righteous Liberals talking about what great things they have done for Ukraine and lecturing Conservatives about how we are not supportive of Ukraine.

Shortly after the invasion, my family took in a family of six Ukrainians from Dnipro in the eastern part of the country. They were our friends and stayed with us for a year and a half. On the day I raised my question, we had their nephew and niece staying in my house. I had coffee with them that morning. I would not betray my friends.

I wonder if the member, or any of his colleagues, took in a Ukrainian family. I sincerely doubt it. They are full of hypocrisy. They do not help Ukrainians any more than anybody else, and they should not engage in hollow rhetoric to that effect.

**Ryan Turnbull:** Mr. Speaker, I do not consider it hollow rhetoric when I watched, in the last Parliament, the Conservative Party take a turn where this House stood together on supporting Ukraine over and over and over again for months, and then all of a sudden, shortly after the new Leader of the Opposition took power, there was a change in tone.

We watched the Conservative Party members stand and vote against the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. We watched them vote against more support for Operation Unifier. I watched them at least four or five times that I can remember, and I have to say I was embarrassed to see this.

Good on the member opposite for supporting a Ukrainian family who was displaced as a result of the war, but do not lecture me on who stands up for Ukraine, because we have stood steadfast behind Ukraine from day one, and will continue to do so.

● (1910)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:10 p.m.)



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Monday, October 6, 2025

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