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Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 24, 2025

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (2025), as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

• (1000)

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): There are 11 motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-3.

[*Translation*]

The Chair has received submissions asking it to select Motions Nos. 1 and 5, standing in the name of the member for Vancouver East, on the grounds that they could not be presented in committee.

[*English*]

The Chair notes that the member did have the opportunity to submit amendments for the committee's consideration as per the committee's routine motion adopted on June 17, 2025. For this reason, Motions Nos. 1 and 5 will not be selected.

All remaining motions have been examined and the Chair is satisfied that they meet the guidelines expressed in the note to Standing Order 76.1(5) regarding the selection of motions in amendments at the report stage.

Motions Nos. 2 to 4 and 6 to 11 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 2 to 4 and 6 to 11 to the House.

• (1005)

[*English*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP) moved:

That Bill C-3, in Clause 1, be amended:

(a) by replacing lines 36 and 37 on page 3 with the following:

“1,095 days before the person’s birth; or”

(b) by replacing lines 28 and 29 on page 4 with the following:

“1,095 days before the person’s birth.”

Hon. Joanne Thompson (for the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship) moved:

That Bill C-3, in Clause 1, be amended by:

(a) replacing lines 36 and 37 on page 3 with the following:

1,095 days before the person’s birth; or

(b) replacing line 28 on page 4 to line 6 on page 5 with the following:

1,095 days before the person’s birth.

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-3, in Clause 1, be amended by deleting line 30 on page 4 to line 6 on page 5.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-3, in Clause 4, be amended:

(a) by replacing lines 27 and 28 on page 7 with the following:

“at least 1,095 days before the person’s adoption; or”

(b) by replacing lines 38 and 39 on page 7 with the following:

“at least 1,095 days before the person’s adoption.”

Hon. Joanne Thompson (for the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship) moved:

That Bill C-3, in Clause 4, be amended by:

(a) replacing lines 27 and 28 on page 7 with the following:

at least 1,095 days before the person's adoption; or

(b) by replacing line 38 on page 7 to line 15 on page 8 with the following:

at least 1,095 days before the person’s adoption.

(c) ...

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-3, in Clause 4, be amended by deleting line 40 on page 7 to line 15 on page 8.

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 5.1.

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-3, in Clause 6, be amended by replacing lines 14 to 23 on page 9 with the following:

“6 Paragraph 27(1)(j.1) of the Act is amended by”

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 6.1.

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She said: Mr. Speaker, my motions to amend Bill C-3 would restore the bill to its original form. They would rectify the Conservatives' punitive and unconstitutional law that stripped the children of Canadian parents the right to pass on Canadian citizenship to second-generation born-abroad children, separating families, rendering some stateless and creating two classes of Canadians more than a decade ago. They respond to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruling that Canada's citizenship laws are unconstitutional. They would restore justice for lost Canadian families.

Canadians who live, work or study abroad and their second-generation born-abroad children should never be treated as lesser citizens.

When Bill C-3 went before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, to say I was disappointed in the amendments from the Conservatives, which were supported by the Bloc, is an understatement. Frankly, I do not understand why the Bloc changed its position. When I was at that committee, I worked closely with the Bloc member. We were in agreement on making these changes. After the election, something happened. I do not know exactly what happened, but the Bloc flipped and supported the Conservative motions.

It is with dismay that I stand here today to move these amendments and make these statements. Many lost Canadian family members contacted me right after the committee, expressing frustration, anger and dismay. I share their views. I have had much to say on this topic in the last 10 years. I have carried this file with me for years. Finally bringing it to the stage where we can ensure that Canada's citizenship laws are charter-compliant was extremely important, and seeing it dismantled the way it was at committee was shocking.

At this point, I think it would be most appropriate to put on the record the words of a lost Canadian family in reaction to the Conservative and Bloc amendments to Bill C-3 at committee. This letter is from a woman named Majda Dabaghi, who represents the sentiments of many lost Canadian families. I have received so many letters and calls from lost Canadian family members about this. Let me put their words on the public record.

Referring to the Conservative and the Bloc members, she said:

Overall, their interventions were framed around immigration anxieties rather than citizenship rights....

A few points stand out:

First, Members of Parliament continue to conflate immigration and citizenship.

When she says "Members of Parliament", I want to be clear that she is referring to the Conservative and Bloc members of the committee. She continued:

Bill C-3 is not about granting citizenship to newcomers with tenuous ties to Canada; it is about restoring equal rights to Canadians who already have a genuine, demonstrable connection to their country. Canadians who live, study, or work abroad contribute meaningfully to Canada's global presence, economy, and values. They should be celebrated, not excluded.

Second, the rhetoric around so-called "Canadians of convenience" has been weaponized to justify exclusionary amendments. That narrative is deeply harmful and, frankly, inaccurate. At one point, [the member for Saskatoon West] referred to people like me as "visitors to Canada." I found that remark profoundly insulting. It deepens the wounds inflicted by the First Generation Rule—a policy that already fractured the identity and sense of belonging of thousands of Canadians abroad.

I am a Canadian. I was raised in Ottawa and Whistler; I have lived and worked in Canada for most of my life. My Canadian identity is not conditional on geography, nor should my children's right to citizenship depend on political games. The notion that I am somehow less Canadian because I have lived internationally is offensive and contrary to the Charter's principles of equality and mobility.

• (1010)

The shift away from the cumulative 1,095-day connection test to a consecutive-day requirement is unworkable, discriminatory, and unconstitutional. It disregards the modern realities of family, work, and study, and it directly violates Section 6 of the Charter, which guarantees the right of all Canadian citizens to move, leave, and re-enter Canada freely.

These amendments do not only harm Canadians abroad—they harm all Canadians. They erode the very principle of equal citizenship by creating a hierarchy of rights based on geography and every Canadian's mobility rights are weakened.

What is most frustrating is the politicking behind these changes. The amendments are being used as a proxy battle over immigration fears rather than a good-faith debate on citizenship equality. The lack of preparation from some MPs and the eagerness to grandstand rather than legislate responsibly are infuriating.

I might add that at committee, officials noted that with these amendments, it is possible that a new class of lost Canadians could be created.

Those are the sentiments of a lost Canadian family. It is a reflection of many lost Canadian families, including those who have been harmed, those who took the government to court and those who were told when they were pregnant and expecting a child during COVID that they were somehow supposed to leave their families, travel back to Canada, find a place to stay and find a new health care team to deliver their child. That is what they were supposed to do during COVID just so they could ensure that their child would have citizenship. How does that make sense? It does not.

Our laws have been discriminatory for more than a decade, ever since the Conservatives, under the Harper regime, stripped lost Canadians of their rights to pass on citizenship to second-generation born-abroad children.

I want to be clear that in bringing these motions forward, there is no deal with the Liberal government. There is no quid pro quo. I do not have any lost Canadian family myself, but I am doing this because it is the right thing to do. It is an important thing to do. It is the Canadian thing to do.

Government Orders

We should all be treated equally. No one should be treated as a second-class citizen. The citizenship rights of those who are lucky enough to be born with citizenship should be celebrated and honoured. There is no question about that. Of course, we should not abuse it. However, we should not penalize the people who travel, work or fall in love abroad, and God forbid they should have children abroad. That is what these amendments would do. Restoring those rights per the court ruling and bringing the bill back to its original form are the right things to do.

I hope we can support these amendments so that we can all stand tall and proud that Canada's citizenship laws will finally be charter-compliant. Let us not conflate immigrants' rights to earn their citizenship with that of Canadians' birthright. Let us not fuel the current atmosphere of anti-immigrant and anti-migrant sentiment that is washing over us from south of the border. We are better than that. Let us not fall prey to that. Conservatives may not believe that, because that is who they are. Maybe that is what it is, but I am not like them and I refuse to let it happen.

I hope all members of this House will support these amendments so that we can stand tall and proud, with our Canadian values intact.

• (1015)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the passion that the member has expressed on the issue. I know it has been a very important issue for her personally for a good length of time.

We know there have been individuals like Mr. Chapman and many others who have really been fighting for the cause, advocating that we recognize the value of our citizenship and the people who should have citizenship, and they are pleased to see that we now have this bill before us. It is, at the least, a very significant step forward in recognizing and giving citizenship to many people who should have had it long ago.

Could the member provide her thoughts on how important it is that we finally get to a stage where people would be getting their citizenship?

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I have been carrying this file for more than a decade.

As I have said, I do not have lost Canadians within my own family unit. My children were born in Canada. I am an immigrant, so I am a first-generation born-abroad individual, but my children were born here, so they are not impacted in any shape or form. However, that does not matter.

What matters is that there are people who are lost Canadians in this context. It is critically important to pass this legislation back to its original form, based on the amendments made to Senate Bill S-245 that I motivated. It is also based on the government bill later introduced in the last Parliament as Bill C-71.

Here we are. It is morally and legally the right thing to do, and that is why we have to do it.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the floor says that the amendments are designed to ostracize immigrants and that they are anti-immigration.

I would therefore like to ask her the following question. Suppose I go abroad and my children are born abroad, if they decide to stay abroad and then have children of their own, will this law also apply to them, or does it only apply to immigrants?

[*English*]

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, it would apply to second-generation born-abroad children. That is what this is about.

The amendments that the Conservatives and the Bloc supported treat second-generation born-abroad children as though they were immigrants. That is the issue.

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Vancouver East for her absolutely brilliant motions today.

One of the concerns I have had is that since the new government took power, I continue to see members' trying to pass bills in the House that would violate human rights and would actually violate the Constitution.

Why are we participating in this dangerous, slippery slope by not upholding our Constitution and the international conventions that Canada has signed on to?

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for seconding my motion and for her ongoing advocacy for basic human rights, not just for Canadians but for everyone across the globe. Her relentless, untiring tackling of and fighting for basic human rights for all people is who we are as Canadians.

By the way, the law on lost Canadians' citizenship birthright has been deemed unconstitutional by the Ontario Superior Court. In fact, the government has been forced to bring this legislation forward. It should have been done years ago, without the court's making the ruling, but the government has not done it, and the court has ruled that the law is unconstitutional.

We have to rectify this. Again, I ask all members of the House to support my amendments.

• (1020)

Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the member speak a little more about how important it is for Canadians to be able to travel without putting their offsprings' citizenship at risk?

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, this is important because Canadians are global citizens. We travel. Canada is a global country, so when people travel, study abroad and work abroad, they should not be penalized for it. That is why we need to fix the legislation right now.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Tatiana Auguste (Terrebonne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

I have the honour of speaking today in support of Bill C-3 and to highlight how it strengthens the legislative framework of Canadian citizenship. Following second reading, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration completed its review of the bill and heard from numerous witnesses.

Many wanted to know exactly how many people will be affected by the coming into force of this legislation. What is the exact number of Canadians who have been stripped of their citizenship? The term “lost Canadians” has generally been used to describe people who have lost or never had Canadian citizenship due to certain obsolete provisions of citizenship legislation.

The majority of cases of Canadians who lost their citizenship have been resolved through amendments to the Citizenship Act in 2009 and 2015. These changes have enabled certain individuals to regain or obtain Canadian citizenship if they had lost it. However, a small group of people and their descendants remain excluded. These are the people that will mainly be affected by Bill C-3.

The bill also applies to people who are not typically considered lost Canadians, such as those who were born or adopted abroad by Canadian parents who are citizens by descent and who are affected by the first-generation limit, which was implemented in 2009.

One of the main reasons why we do not know the exact number of lost Canadians or citizens by descent is that the government has not kept a registry of births abroad since the enactment of the Citizenship Act in 1977. There is no way of knowing about these births unless the parent contacts Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC.

A Canadian parent can request a citizenship certificate for their child who is born abroad. When a child is adopted abroad, the parent can apply for direct citizenship. This process enables the government to assess eligibility for citizenship on a case-by-case basis. As a result, the child's citizenship is based on that of the parent, not on their place of birth. It is not necessary to register the birth abroad or to declare the parents' country of residence to establish a person's Canadian citizenship.

In short, birth registration is typically the responsibility of the country where the birth takes place. IRCC is only informed of citizenship by descent cases when an application for proof of Canadian citizenship is filed, either by the person concerned or by one of their parents.

To better anticipate future applications, it may be useful to look at the number of past cases. The legislative amendments made in 2009 and 2015, specifically addressing the situation of lost Canadians, allowed more than 20,000 people to contact IRCC to obtain proof of citizenship after their status was corrected. The vast majority of cases have been resolved as a result of these legislative changes.

We know that the department has not seen a significant increase in applications for proof of citizenship as a result of these two sets

of legislative amendments. Some citizens lost their status for reasons related to the old rules for retaining citizenship. Typically, an average of 35 to 40 applications a year for restoring citizenship through a discretionary measure are received. However, these have been on a downward trend, and we expect that to continue.

IRCC received about 4,200 applications between January 2024 and July 2025 from people affected by the first-generation limit on citizenship by descent who qualify for the interim measure. These figures suggest that the remaining number of lost Canadians and their descendants is relatively small, probably in the tens of thousands. They are expected to gradually apply as they become aware of their rights.

I would now like to outline the objectives of Bill C-3. If passed, this bill would automatically grant citizenship to anyone born abroad to a Canadian parent before the legislation's coming into force. It would also apply to people who are currently unable to obtain citizenship by descent because of the first-generation limit, including the remaining lost Canadians and their descendants.

● (1025)

Once the law comes into force, any child born outside the country to a Canadian parent who was themselves born outside the country will be considered a Canadian citizen from birth if the parent in question can prove a substantial connection to Canada, that is, a cumulative physical presence of three years in the country before the child is born.

We cannot predict how many children will be born abroad after this legislation passes. However, as long as the Canadian parent who was born outside the country was physically present in Canada for at least three years before the child's birth, they can pass their citizenship on to the child.

Some members of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration raised important questions about foreign adoptions. As much as possible, the government wants to continue to treat children adopted abroad and those born abroad in the same way, while following clear rules regarding how parents pass on their citizenship.

Any child adopted abroad by a Canadian parent before the new law came into effect would now be eligible for direct citizenship, even if they had previously been excluded due to the first-generation limit on Canadian citizenship by descent. The committee analyzed these measures carefully. At this stage, the bill remains the most equitable and practical solution.

Government Orders

In December 2023, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruled that key provisions of the first-generation limit are unconstitutional. It has suspended its decision until November 20, 2025, to give Parliament time to create a new framework. If the bill is not passed by that date, Canadian citizenship could be granted indefinitely to future generations born outside Canada, with no time limit and no requirement for a meaningful connection to the country.

However, certain groups will continue to be disadvantaged by the first-generation limit on citizenship by descent. Many of them will not become citizens or will not have access to citizenship because the order will be imposed before Bill C-3 comes into force. This includes people adopted abroad by Canadian parents beyond the first generation, lost Canadians under section 8 who lost their citizenship status as a result of the age 28 rule, and certain individuals born abroad prior to April 1, 1949.

This scenario would create legal uncertainties for families and complicate the application of the Citizenship Act. That is why it is crucial that we pass Bill C-3 quickly.

I hope these explanations will provide some clarity around Bill C-3 and pave the way for it to pass so that the remaining lost Canadians can have their citizenship restored, so that access to citizenship by descent beyond the first generation is expanded in a clear and inclusive manner, and so that we avoid creating more lost Canadians in the future.

Passing this bill will allow Canada to take a decisive step forward with respect to lost Canadians and to strengthen the integrity of our citizenship framework for generations to come.

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the Liberals are about to remove an amendment the committee made to include a language requirement in the bill.

Language is a unifier in Canada, and the Conservatives worked with the Bloc Québécois to ensure that somebody who would be receiving citizenship through this chain migration bill would at least have to pass a language test that is similar to the one for somebody who is receiving citizenship through naturalization.

Why would the Liberals table an amendment that would create a two-tiered citizenship class, one that denigrates Canada's language rights as they relate to citizenship acquisition?

• (1030)

[Translation]

Tatiana Auguste: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her great question.

Canada has two official languages, and we want to protect them. However, this is about fixing a problem caused by a framework. We need to give these citizens the right to their citizenship through legislation.

Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Terrebonne, for her eloquence and, of course, for her presentation. My question concerns the substantial connection test for members of the second generation.

Why is this test necessary for members of the second generation born after the legislation comes into force, but not for those born before it comes into force?

Tatiana Auguste: Mr. Speaker, moving forward, this legislation will ensure that the opportunity to pass on citizenship is subject to reasonable limits.

Prescriptive application of the substantial connection test is meant to strike a balance between setting reasonable limits on citizenship by descent, in order to preserve the right to and privilege of Canadian citizenship, and ensuring the flexibility and inclusivity needed to address the cases of individuals previously excluded from citizenship by descent based on the first-generation limit.

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the amendments that were voted on in committee, there is this notion of righting wrongs as well as setting guidelines and ensuring that people who become Canadians continue to maintain a genuine connection to their new country.

Can my colleague discuss another key amendment, which provides for the publication of an annual report to determine the impact of this legislation?

My colleague referred to a few thousand people but the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that there would be up to 150,000 new citizens within the first five years. It seems to me that it would be a good idea to understand the impact of the laws that we pass.

Why is my colleague moving an amendment today that ultimately goes against transparency and accountability?

Tatiana Auguste: Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, this bill is about transparency. The majority of cases of lost Canadians were resolved through legislative amendments. Between 2019 and 2023, we received an average of 48,000 applications for certificates and proof of citizenship. About 80% of these applications came from people born abroad. We will follow up on those applications for citizenship.

[English]

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this was court ordered. Why is it dangerous for parliamentarians to not only not uphold court orders, but also do it in a manner that violates our Constitution, which is, in fact, the rule of law?

[Translation]

Tatiana Auguste: Mr. Speaker, indeed, Bill C-3 was introduced in response to this request from the court and seeks to create a framework in which IRCC will be able to proceed in a fair and inclusive manner.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a mess. What we are dealing with today is an abject mess. I have to explain to the people who might be watching what has happened and what we are dealing with today.

The Liberals had a court ruling. There was a court ruling at a lower court that said the first-generation limit of citizenship by descent could go on indefinitely. The previous Conservative government had put in place a rule that said that, if somebody is going to pass down their citizenship to a child born abroad, they could only do that for one generation, and that somebody who obtains citizenship by descent has to have a substantive connection to Canada. This was done in the late aughts to prevent something called citizenship of convenience, as we saw cases in the 2000s where Canada was called on to evacuate people who had never paid taxes and who had Canadian citizenship, but who had never really been in Canada. They had acquired citizenship through descent. When Canada evacuated some of these people, most of them just went back. That is why the first-generation limit was put in place. Rather than challenge the court ruling, the Liberals said, "Yeah, okay, we'll just agree with the court".

I cannot believe this, but one of my colleagues asked why the government would challenge a court ruling. Why would we do that? It is because Parliament is supreme. In fact, the correct answer from the government on that, which I cannot believe members did not know, is that, per section 91(25) of the Constitution Act, Parliament has the authority to amend the Citizenship Act to impose new restrictions on how citizenship is acquired in our country.

Why does Parliament have the right to do that? Why does Parliament have the imperative to do that? It is because Canadian citizenship has value. It should not be appointed judges who can do that. It should not be anybody other than duly elected representatives talking about what restrictions we place on how somebody obtains Canadian citizenship. That is why we have the Citizenship Act. There are limits and rules for how people can acquire Canadian citizenship.

About a decade ago, the Liberals came into power. A lot of the far left principles that we see in the NDP espouse something called postnationalism. This is an ideological belief. The former prime minister actually said there is no national identity in Canada. There is no national identity. There is now a minister of national identity in the Liberal Party who said there is not one way to be Canadian. Then the new Prime Minister, during the election campaign, when asked what it means to be Canadian, said it is to be not American.

We are at a juncture in the country right now. I mean this from the bottom of my heart. This should concern all parliamentarians. The social fabric of our country is breaking down because of a decade of what we have seen from federal leaders in this country. It is that concept of postnationalism, where there is no national identity, there is no value to our citizenship and we can just eliminate first-generation rules to allow people to obtain citizenship by descent in a way that is easier than it is for people who have naturalized to this country.

This is why Conservatives worked with the Bloc Québécois to amend this disastrous chain migration bill at committee. Conserva-

tives put forward some very common-sense amendments to try to ensure that people who are obtaining citizenship by descent through this chain migration bill would have to go through the same processes as somebody who is obtaining citizenship through naturalization, so that at the very least, we are not creating a two-tier citizenship acquisition system in this country.

I want to thank my Bloc colleagues for working with us and passing these amendments. The amendments we put forward were very common sense. We sought to harmonize the residency requirements that somebody has to have to obtain citizenship through naturalization with citizenship by descent, so they have to live here at least three out of five years to have the provisions in this bill apply to their descendants. That seems reasonable to me. It is a reasonable amendment.

• (1035)

The second thing Conservatives did was amend the bill to have a language acquisition requirement, the same language acquisition requirement that is there for people who want to obtain citizenship through naturalization. It is the exact wording that is already in the Citizenship Act. We said this is reasonable. Why is it reasonable? It is because language is a unifier, and language is part of our national identity.

There are two official languages in Canada. They are very important to what it means to be Canadian. They are integral and core, especially in Quebec and other parts of the country where there is a whole concept of national identity that is firmly entrenched and attached to language. We made that amendment. It is common sense. It is the same that is already in the Citizenship Act.

We also said maybe somebody should have to take a citizenship test. It is the same requirement of somebody who wants to naturalize to Canada to take a citizenship test. They have to read the citizenship guide and have a basic understanding of what Canada is and what our rules are. Our national identity needs to be rooted in the fact that we all have a duty for not just the privileges associated with citizenship but also the responsibilities. These are things taken right from the citizenship guide. For example, there is a requirement to abandon violent and extreme ideology upon coming to Canada. Anybody who is or wants to be Canadian must abandon violent and extreme ideology. It is right in the citizenship guide. Conservatives amended the legislation to have a citizenship test. This is the same as it is for somebody who wants to obtain citizenship through naturalization.

As my Bloc colleague raised in a question earlier, Conservatives wanted a report to Parliament on how many people have been given citizenship by descent because of the fact that the Liberals did not challenge this ruling. They could have challenged this ruling, but they chose not to. They chose unlimited citizenship by descent with residency requirements that are weaker than what people who naturalize to this country have.

The reason I am so fired up is that I have watched, through a decade of Liberal postnationalism, which they have not just said but have also operationalized, the eroding of our democratic institutions. We have seen their catch-and-release bail policies over the last year and the crime that has wrought on our streets. It is the erosion of the justice system. We have seen the censorship bills they have put in place and the erosion of free speech. While we might not agree on certain types of policy or how to get to certain types of outcomes, if those democratic institutions are eroded through a postnational ideology, and we tell the world that our citizenship does not have value by gutting a common-sense amendment like this, it would further erode the social fabric of our country.

What is the outcome of that? It would erode Canada's pluralism. The only way that pluralism and multiculturalism can exist is through a democracy that has strong respect for the rule of law, for institutions such as freedom of speech and unifying things such as language. Mark my words, the Liberals continuing their far left postnationalism by gutting common-sense amendments on things like language requirements will only further degrade Canada's pluralism.

We are at a moment in history when we have to start restoring the value of Canadian citizenship, not further degrading it. I beg colleagues to ensure the amendments that were passed in a multi-partisan way at committee are kept so that we can keep the value of Canadian citizenship and reverse the decade of damage that the far left Liberal postnational ideology has done to the value of Canadian citizenship and our pride in national identity.

● (1040)

Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member said that Parliament is supreme and we should, therefore, ignore the ruling of the court. I would suggest to her that, rather, it is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that is supreme, and it is the role of the court to advise parliamentarians when our laws exceed the capacity of the charter.

I would ask the member to please comment on that.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals rolled over on the court ruling. They said that Parliament should not have a debate on this. They allowed the first-generation limit to be eliminated by a lower court.

Parliament is supreme. I cited the part of our laws through which we have the right to determine what Canadian citizenship is, and the Liberals took that debate away from us. They had to extend the limit on the court ruling because they had screwed it up so badly that they did not have anything in place to prevent unlimited citizenship by descent. It is preposterous.

Government Orders

If the Liberals think that the court ruling should not be challenged, then why are we here? Why do we not just give everything to the judges? I say no.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague said, today's debate raises important questions about democracy. What role do judges play and what role do legislators play? The judge said it was discriminatory and told legislators to do their job and determine what the real connection is between a Canadian born abroad and his or her country. A guideline has been proposed, a reasonable limit that mirrors the immigration system. That is the job of legislators. It is not up to judges to decide everything, because otherwise we would have a government of judges, and that is not what we want.

I would like to know what my colleague has to say about the state of our parliamentary democracy if everything that is decided in committee is overturned when the report is presented to the House.

● (1045)

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I cannot wrap my brain around what is happening. We had members of Parliament stand up in here today and say that we should never, as a Parliament, exercise the authority our constituents have given to us when a court has ruled on something. We have the power to make legislation. We have the power in our charter to overturn court rulings.

The Liberals made a deliberate choice not to challenge legislation that speaks to the value of Canadian citizenship and how something so precious can be applied. They essentially eliminated rules for that. That is bananas. It is antithetical to the principle of parliamentary supremacy.

I am so proud to stand here and say that Canadian citizenship has value and that it is worth having this debate in the House of Commons. I believe there should be a language requirement; I believe there should be security checks, and I believe there should be a citizenship test. Anybody who does not believe this needs to give their head a shake.

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill for the passion and knowledge she brings to this debate. My question is, why? There is so much value to Canadian citizenship that is recognized around the world. Why does the government want to cheapen it?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, over the last decade we have heard a lot about what Canada can give to the world. We had the citizenship and immigration department tweet last week that Canada is essentially the walk-in clinic for the world.

Government Orders

It is about time this place started talking about what the responsibilities are of being a citizen as well, such as respect for the rule of law and upholding freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and the right to worship without persecution or fear. Those things are under threat right now, and it is because of 10 years of the Liberal government erasing our national symbols and saying that in order for us to move forward, we have to constantly wallow in the past.

I am not saying there are not things we should be correcting, but if we are not talking about the responsibilities associated with citizenship, our pluralism will not survive.

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reason we are here is that the Conservatives, more than a decade ago, brought in a law that is in violation of the charter. I know the member is a feminist, and this violation hits women the most. That is what the court found.

If we stand with women and their rights, why would we not ensure these amendments are passed?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, why? It is because the member opposite is so radically far left and so postnationalist that she believes people who get citizenship by descent should not have to take a citizenship test, which includes such things as that female genital mutilation is a barbaric practice or that people need to reject violent and extreme ideology.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, they are heckling at me for the—

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

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we are debating Bill C-3, an act to amend the Citizenship Act. This bill responds to a court ruling.

Let us take a look at the historical background. In 2009, the Harper government amended the Citizenship Act to prohibit the transmission of citizenship beyond the second generation for children born outside Canada, even if their parents are Canadian. In December 2023, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice struck down provisions of this law on the grounds that they violated section 6 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which deals with mobility rights and states that every citizen has the right to enter, remain in and leave Canada, as well as section 15 of the charter, which deals with equality rights. The parties challenging the law represented seven families that were discriminated against by this law, and the court recognized that the ban introduced in this law was unfair, especially for those who were forced to choose between the birthplace of their child and the transmission of citizenship.

The case of the Brooke-Bjorkquist family illustrates the problem perfectly. A child was born in Geneva in 2010 to Canadian parents who were working for the government abroad. Despite the fact that this child was born to two Canadian parents and she returned to Canada at the age of one, she would not be able to follow in her parents' footsteps under the provisions of the act. She would not be

able to choose to work abroad at some point in her career and give birth to a child abroad, because her child would not be able to obtain Canadian citizenship. That is ridiculous because the child was only born in Switzerland because of circumstances related to her parents' work and she spent most of her life in Canada.

The bill seeks to correct this type of injustice, which is why the Bloc Québécois supported it at second reading. Today, this bill has been sent back to the House from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration for report stage consideration. At this point, we must ask ourselves a very simple question: What is the purpose of parliamentary committees?

After reviewing 26 briefs, hearing from 14 witnesses, holding two meetings and conducting four hours of work, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration is sending the bill back to us with nine amendments. These nine amendments were adopted by a majority of committee members. What is the purpose of parliamentary committees in the context of a minority government like the one we have now? Are they a necessary but futile step, at the end of which the House overturns all the amendments that the parliamentary committee adopted by a majority vote? Alternatively, are committees a place where the will of the people can be expressed by representatives of recognized opposition parties?

I would remind members that, in April, the people elected more opposition members than government members. Were they sending a message? Did the people not give power to one party while asking that the other parties be more involved in law-making? I think so.

Yvon Pinard, the then president of the Privy Council, said the following about committees on November 29, 1982, and I quote: "Experience has shown that smaller and more flexible committees, when entrusted with interesting matters, can have a very positive impact on the development of our parliamentary system, upgrade the role of Members of Parliament, sharpen their interest and ultimately enable this institution [or committees] to produce much more enlightened measures that better meet the wishes of the Canadian people." I think the last part of that statement is the most relevant part.

The bill as improved by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration is a bill that contains more informed measures and, in our opinion, better reflects the wishes of the public. However, the government now wants to revisit the work that has been done and undo the improvements made in committee. It should be noted that the amendments now being proposed in the House come from the government, but also from a member of a non-recognized party.

It could be argued that, although that party is not recognized, its members should still be involved in the law-making process. That is difficult to dispute. The real question is, how involved can they be? Can they go so far as to erase almost all the work done in committee, to the point of setting aside the votes cast in committee by representatives of recognized parties? This seems to be at odds with the message sent by voters, who wanted to give more power to opposition parties.

• (1050)

There seems to be a risk that, at the end of the process, we will ask ourselves the same question: What is the purpose of parliamentary committees in the current Parliament?

The Bloc Québécois asks that the work done by the members of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration be respected. We ask this because we believe it is a matter of parliamentary democracy and respect for the will of the voters, but also, in our opinion, because the amendments adopted in committee improve the bill amending citizenship.

The Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-3 as amended by the committee. The bill was amended so that the requirements for passing on citizenship by descent to second-generation Canadians born abroad would align in every way with the requirements applied to naturalized citizens going through the immigration process. Bill C-3 proposed that citizenship be granted to children if one parent had spent at least 1,095 days in the country, the equivalent of about three years, over an indeterminate period prior to the child's birth. The Bloc Québécois supported an amendment to include this 1,095-day requirement, but over a five-year period instead, to match the requirement for people seeking citizenship through the immigration process. This amendment corrects injustices and ensures that new Canadians have a real and substantial connection to their new country, not a tenuous one.

Furthermore, we also supported an amendment to require citizenship applicants over the age of 18 to meet additional requirements. Like naturalized citizens, they would have to pass a language test, pass a knowledge and citizenship test and undergo a security assessment.

Another amendment adopted in committee establishes some degree of accountability by requiring that a report be tabled in Parliament containing the annual statistics on the number of citizenships granted under the new law. It is important to know what kind of impact this new legislation is having. The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that the new rules could result in 150,000 new Canadian citizens over the next five years. That is more than the entire population of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands, and more than the vast majority of ridings in the House. That is a significant number of people. I think it is important to understand what effect this new legislation will have.

We believe that these amendments respond to the court's ruling calling on us to determine what constitutes a real connection to Canada. By aligning the naturalization requirements for second-generation children born abroad with those for individuals seeking citizenship through immigration, we are ensuring a level playing field for everyone.

However, the amendments that the government and the member from an unrecognized party are now proposing to the House seek to restore the amended clauses to their original form, except for the three requirements regarding security assessments, the French language and citizenship tests for people aged 18 to 55. At least that is something.

Apart from those three things, the amendments introduced by the government seek to overturn the work of the majority of the mem-

Statements by Members

bers of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. The government's intent is to restore the bill to the way it was before it was studied in committee, reinstating the requirement that one of the parents must have been present for 1,095 days over an indefinite period, rather than within the five years preceding the birth of the child, in order for the child to obtain Canadian citizenship by birth. In our opinion, it is reasonable to require the parent to have been present in Canada for about three of the five years before the birth.

The amendment also removes the requirement to table an annual report in Parliament on the number of citizens who have benefited from the law in order to obtain citizenship. Why oppose a transparency measure? Why refuse to learn what effect this new law will have on the number of Canadian citizens? I do not understand this.

That is why we will vote against the amendments proposed by the government and the member at report stage and support the version of the bill as amended by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. These amendments remove important safeguards that were added in committee by a majority vote in order to avoid a situation where, in righting wrongs, we leave the door too wide open, causing citizenship to lose its value.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1055)

[English]

HOUSING

Aslam Rana (Hamilton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's housing crisis demands urgent action to lower costs and expand access to affordable and sustainable homes. Recently, the federal government, together with the City of Hamilton, celebrated the completion of 82 new homes on Queenston Road in Hamilton Centre.

Our work did not stop there. We also marked the groundbreaking of a 40-unit supportive housing project on Gage Avenue North for indigenous people transitioning out of homelessness, investing \$12 million. We are also proud to join Kiwanis Homes next week for the launch of its new project on Barton Street East, again in Hamilton Centre.

We are working with community partners to build homes at a rate not seen since the Second World War.

* * *

• (1100)

WOMEN'S ROYAL CANADIAN NAVAL SERVICE

Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently, I had the honour to pay tribute to the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service, also known as the Wrens, at the 83rd anniversary of its training establishment in my hometown of Cambridge.

Statements by Members

Established in 1942, HMCS *Conestoga* was located in a former detention centre for “wayward” girls. The facility that was originally meant to punish women was transformed into a place to empower them. Their courage was equal to any sailor's, yet for too long their stories were untold, stories such as that of Isabel Macneill, who was trained here before going on to be the navy's first female commanding officer.

We remember not only the Wrens but all those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for country. Within the House of Commons lies a simple, dark room, and in that room are books with the name of every single Canadian who gave their life to fight for freedom. If ever someone visits Ottawa, I welcome them to pay tribute to the heroes in these pages in the Room of Remembrance.

* * *

[*Translation*]

**PÉDALER CONTRE LES VIOLENCES CONJUGALES
CAMPAIGN**

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight a remarkable initiative being led by four workers from Carrefour pour elle, a shelter for women escaping domestic violence.

From October 24 to 26, Daly, Taïmé, Maxime and Amélie will take on an incredible challenge: a 48-hour cycling relay across their service area to raise awareness about domestic violence and fundraise donations to support the women and children staying at their shelter.

This gesture of solidarity and self-sacrifice is a testament to the participants' deep commitment to their community.

On behalf of Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, I commend these four women and I urge everyone to support this noble cause.

* * *

[*English*]

WORLD WAR II VETERANS

Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Remembrance Day is all about thanking Canada's war veterans and remembering those who never came home. Sadly, Canada's Second World War veterans are getting fewer and fewer in number. Recently, Regina lost its last remaining World War II veteran.

“Ossie” Lakness enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy in 1943, shortly after his 20th birthday. He went on to serve as a quartermaster on the HMCS *St. Stephen*, guarding supply convoys as they crossed the hazardous U-boat-infested North Atlantic waters. After the war was over, Ossie went on to live a fulfilling life, farming near Govan, Saskatchewan, starting a family with his wife Reta and enjoying curling in his spare time. His funeral will be held tomorrow at St. Mary's Parish Hall in Regina.

As the number of World War II veterans becomes fewer and fewer, I encourage all Canadians to take the time to thank a veteran of the Second World War while they are still with us.

**40TH ANNIVERSARY OF WOMEN'S FASHION
BOUTIQUE**

Peter Fragiskatos (London Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour the incredible contributions of Jo-Ann Fisher, who, in the early 1980s, opened a small women's fashion boutique that has become Hangar9, a name and store that is synonymous with quality in our community. It is a clothing store that has catered to the community for all of these years. She has since operated that store with her daughters, Lisa, Denise and Rachael. On the 40th anniversary of Hangar9, I salute their efforts.

Entrepreneurship is a great thing. We are so valued to have entrepreneurs in my community of London, and throughout the country, in fact, who continue to make a contribution. Small business is the backbone of our economy, and Hangar9 is a testament to that.

I invite the community to attend the special retrospective that has been planned, where memories of the past 40 years will be shared by all those at Hangar9. We are in their absolute debt. They have done such a great thing. I wish them all the very best going forward.

* * *

FRONTLINE WORKERS

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first responders, nurses and health care workers serve and protect our communities. They run toward danger, they heal our broken bones and they hold our hand as we take our last breath. However, what we have seen in the last 48 hours by the Liberal government, which is using frontline heroes as political pawns, is shameful.

I received a message from a first responder late last night who said that this week, they were so hopeful that political agendas would be put aside to pass a bill that had been unanimously supported three times and should have passed in the last Parliament. They said that now our safety is once again being used as a bargaining chip in a bill that will never pass in a minority Parliament. They are saddened to see their government act like this. They gave their life to a career that has destroyed them.

Violence is not part of their job description. The Liberals tying the safety of our first responders and health care workers to an omnibus bill that will never pass is disgusting. Does a first responder or nurse actually have to lose their life before they will take this seriously?

• (1105)

REFUGEE 613

Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to remind members that 10 years ago, we were at the height of a refugee crisis during which thousands of people were coming in from Syria. My community in Ottawa Centre responded by stepping up and welcoming many refugees.

Out of that anniversary comes the story of Refugee 613, an incredible organization created to help Syrian refugees settle and build better lives right here in Canada. It has done a tremendous job in helping not only Syrian refugees but many other refugees over the years. Just this week, it celebrated its 10th anniversary of building an incredible community.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Louisa Taylor and all the volunteers and staff of Refugee 613 for building a thoughtful, more inclusive community here in Ottawa, which has benefited all of our country.

* * *

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to this week's Auditor General report, the Liberal government continues to fall short on getting the Canadian Armed Forces the personnel and equipment it needs to succeed. The report shows that the military is short 7,000 housing units, and the plans to build more are woefully insufficient. Only one in 13 people who apply to join completes the process, but we are short 13,000 troops. This will see an 81% shortage in critical trades for over 10 years.

The more we discuss this at the defence committee, the worse it gets. Yesterday, I confirmed that despite creating a whole new bureaucracy to streamline military procurement, led by a banker friend of the Prime Minister who may have multiple conflicts of interest, the new Defence Investment Agency will not deal with the F-35 project, the largest military procurement in Canadian history. According to the Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, the F-35 report is complete and in the Prime Minister's hands, but the decision is still under review.

How much longer must the air force wait for the fighter jets it desperately needs? Our military embodies leadership and decisive action. When will the Liberals?

* * *

[Translation]

SEMAINE NATIONALE DE L'ACTION COMMUNAUTAIRE AUTONOME

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is national independent community action week in Quebec, and I rise today to pay tribute to the thousands of organizations across Quebec that work with passion and determination to build a more just, inclusive and supportive society.

Statements by Members

These groups are rooted in our community. They are the glue that holds us together. They defend people's rights, support the vulnerable, promote civic engagement and fight against inequality.

Their independence is an asset, because it allows them to operate freely, according to the real needs of their communities. This week of recognition is a fitting time to commend their unwavering commitment, creativity and resilience.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to thank the 54,000 professionals in the independent community action network and the 4,500 organizations that, day after day, bring these spaces of hope and social transformation to life.

* * *

[English]

WOMEN'S HEALTH PIONEER

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during this Women's History Month, members of this House may be surprised to know that until 1969, it was criminal in Canada for physicians to prescribe oral contraceptives for women for the purpose of contraception. However, some brave physicians who felt that every child should be a wanted child were defying this prohibition before 1969. One of them was Dr. Marion Powell.

Dr. Powell established the first municipally funded birth control clinic in Canada in 1966 when she was the country's first-ever female medical officer of health. I worked with Marion in the 1970s and 1980s when she was director of the Bay Centre for Birth Control, a clinic that is still operated by the Women's College Hospital in Toronto to this day. She was my mentor, and she encouraged me to become a medical officer of health.

As we celebrate Women's History Month, I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Powell for her pioneering work in advancing women's health in Canada.

* * *

COST OF FOOD

Blaine Calkins (Ponoka—Didsbury, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Prime Minister once said that he would be judged by the prices Canadians pay at the grocery store. Canadians have judged him, and Canadians are paying the price. Food inflation is up 4%. Vegetables are up 2%. Sugar is up more than 9%. Meat is up 6%, and beef is up 14%. What is the government's so-called plan? It is to spend more, tax more and call it "affordability". Their hidden food taxes on fuel, food packaging and production show up on the receipt as higher prices for everyone, or at least everyone who has to pay for their own groceries, and Canadians feel it every single time they shop for food.

Statements by Members

When will the Liberals get it through their heads that the more they spend, the more inflation goes up? The more inflation goes up, the more the prices go up for Canadians. Canadians should not have to go hungry because Liberals do not understand basic economics.

* * *

• (1110)

TREAT ACCESSIBLY

Bruce Fanjoy (Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to recognize Treat Accessibly. Earlier this month I joined their founder, Rich Padulo, in Stittsville in my riding of Carleton to participate in the vision to make Halloween accessible for children with disabilities. A street in the community was transformed into a Halloween village, and neighbours set up tables at the ends of driveways, enabling children with limited mobility to trick-or-treat without barriers. I want to thank the Padulo family, Rich, Natasha and their daughter Siena, for their work with communities across Canada to bring treats into the streets and create inclusive spaces where everyone can participate in Halloween.

Treat Accessibly is a reminder that inclusion is not a barrier but an opportunity. I will continue to show up and be supportive of all organizations like Treat Accessibly to create conditions for all Canadians to thrive.

* * *

YOUNG PEOPLE IN CANADA

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told a room full of students that they are going to have to make sacrifices, but young Canadians have already sacrificed enough. They have already sacrificed the dream of home ownership. In 2015, the median age to buy a first home was only 31, and today, after 10 years of Liberal failure it is 38, with some provinces as high as 40. Young Canadians have sacrificed their careers, with youth unemployment at all-time highs, and nearly half of young Canadians have sacrificed by delaying starting a family or by not even having one at all.

The ancient Greeks told the story of the Titan Cronus eating his own children. I hope that is not why the Prime Minister said that we are Athens. Sacrificing our children's future is not good economic policy; it is wrong. Our parents and our grandparents worked hard to make a better life for us, but for the first time in our history, they are saying that this generation is not better off than the last. If that is not a testament to 10 years of Liberal failure, I do not know what is.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ÉCOLE SECONDAIRE DES RIVES

Tatiana Auguste (Terrebonne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 2, I had the immense pleasure of swearing in the student government at École secondaire des Rives in my riding.

Today I have the honour of welcoming those students to Parliament so that they can watch our democracy in action. Taking part in this visit are 36 students and their teachers, Luke Mayba and Isabelle Marion, whom I had the honour of awarding the Parliament

of Canada medal in recognition of their outstanding commitment to this citizen initiative.

The members of the government are Sara Rachel Acosta Rodriguez, prime minister, Carl Xavier Jeudi, deputy prime minister, Merary Lyzeth Rodas Caballero, speaker, Amélie-Ann Guillet, representative, and Acil Tadjer, representative. I wish them every success in their roles. By representing their peers to the administration, they are learning about the principles of democracy and preparing to become the citizens of tomorrow.

* * *

[*English*]

YOUNG PEOPLE IN CANADA

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Prime Minister told a room full of students that they need to make sacrifices. Evidently, from the Prime Minister's globalist jet-setting vantage point, young Canadians have never had it so good. He could not be more wrong. He could not be more out of touch. If the Prime Minister had any grip on reality, he would know that after 10 years of the Liberals, young Canadians have sacrificed enough. They have sacrificed with skyrocketing food costs, they have sacrificed without jobs in the face of the worst employment numbers in 30 years, and they have sacrificed the dream of owning a home, with home ownership unattainable for three quarters of young Canadians.

Instead of lecturing young Canadians, perhaps the Prime Minister should get a grip, own up to 10 years of Liberal failure and reverse course on his disastrous policies.

* * *

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

MARIE-CHRISTINE BOUCHER

Caroline Desrochers (Trois-Rivières, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is Women's History Month, and I would like to congratulate Marie-Christine Boucher, a woman from my riding of Trois-Rivières, on her appointment as senior director of business operations for the Professional Women's Hockey League.

This appointment is a testament not only to her expertise and commitment to the development of women's hockey, but also to the influence that Trois-Rivières's local talent has throughout North America. Most importantly, it is a testament to the major contribution women are making in the world of sports, both on the field and behind the bench.

As enthusiasm for women's hockey continues to grow around the world, her leadership will help the PWHL consolidate its position on the international stage and inspire a new generation of young female players.

Once again, I offer her my congratulations on this great achievement. Trois-Rivières is proud to have one of our own in such an important position.

Congratulations, Marie-Christine.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister broke his promise to negotiate a trade deal with the Americans, but what do Canadians have for all the Prime Minister's talk? Canadians have higher tariffs than before he was elected, thousands of job losses and concession after concession with nothing in return for Canadians. Now the U.S. president has terminated negotiations with Canada, but the Prime Minister said this morning that they are making great progress.

In what world is the termination of negotiations great progress? When will the Prime Minister deliver the deal he promised?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for months, we have been drawing the distinction between what we can and what we cannot control, including the trade policy of the United States, which has fundamentally shifted. We remain ready to restart negotiations.

At the same time, we are building Canada strong; we are diversifying our supply chains with major economies in the Indo-Pacific, we are reducing internal barriers to trade, and we are getting national projects off the ground, things that I remind the opposition they voted against.

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not have time for the Liberals to play catch-up. What do we have since the Prime Minister's last trip to the White House? We have 5,000 auto jobs lost. What other jobs do we have to sacrifice? A hundred jobs in Maitland have gone to the United States, as well as hundreds of forestry workers. Nine hundred jobs at Imperial Oil are not coming back. All the while, Canadians are suffering with an affordability crisis that has been fuelled by higher taxes under the Liberals and inflationary policies that have driven food prices up at the grocery store.

The Prime Minister is telling young Canadians they need to make sacrifices. When is he going to deliver on his promise with a deal?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is surprising that the member opposite does not recognize that this government has been there to support industry and affected sectors, with a \$5-billion strategic response fund and \$10 billion for liquidity management. At the same time, 80% of our trade is covered by an existing free trade agreement, and we are reducing internal barriers to trade to add up to \$200 billion to the Canadian economy. We urge the opposition to get on board, stand united and build Canada strong.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, Canadians woke up to yet another of the Prime Minister's broken promises.

He was elected because he said that we were going to get an agreement and there would be no tariffs. What has happened over the past six months? New tariffs keep coming in, directly resulting in tens of thousands of job losses.

What did we find out late last night? Trump has terminated the negotiations. What was the Prime Minister's immediate reaction this morning? He said that progress is being made. What planet is the Prime Minister on? Thousands of people are waiting for an agreement and there is none.

Is someone going to rise to defend the indefensible?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for months, we have been emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between what we can control and what we cannot control. We remain ready to resume negotiations.

However, we can still take action here, at home, by launching national construction projects, and by growing and diversifying Canada's economy. We can also build our supply chains. We are going to be here for a strong Canada.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “here in Canada”? Did the minister just say “here in Canada”? Is she aware of what is happening here in Canada?

In the Montreal area, 300 people lost their jobs this week at Pac-car. More than 5,000 workers in the automotive industry across Canada have lost their jobs. People in the aluminum industry, in the lumber industry, in the steel industry and in the automotive industry—thousands of Quebeckers are waiting for a response from the government.

The government keeps saying that it is making progress, although Trump is saying today that negotiations have been terminated. When will the government start acting responsibly?

• (1120)

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition members know that we are here for Canadians, including Quebeckers. We are here with support for the auto industry, the lumber industry and industry in general, with a \$5-billion strategic fund.

At the same time, we are diversifying our supply chains. We will build the Canadian economy, and we will be here for a strong Canada. Will my colleague support us?

Oral Questions

[English]

YOUTH

Jamil Jivani (Bowmanville—Oshawa North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I travelled to four university campuses to hear from Canadian students, many of whom are feeling very anxious about their future in this economy.

This week I listened to the Prime Minister speak to a group of students and lecture them on the need to make sacrifices, as if they had not already been asked to do so. His speech was tone-deaf and out of touch.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to getting spending under control and stop putting the next generation of Canadians into even more debt?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has said that in the upcoming budget, it is going to be making generational investments. They will be generational because we know that youth are at the heart of Canada's future, and we have a plan to ensure that they succeed.

It is why we are going to be creating tens of thousands of jobs through major projects that the Conservatives call “pathetic”. It is why we are going to be building Canada homes and creating new, affordable homes for young people, which the Conservatives call shacks, and why we continue to invest in things that support our young people, like our national school food program, which yesterday the Conservatives called “garbage”.

When will the Conservatives actually stand up for Canada's youth?

Jamil Jivani (Bowmanville—Oshawa North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian people can hear more empty Liberal promises and more generational word salad, all of which adds up to more spending and more debt thrust upon the next generation of Canadian dreamers, builders, strivers and hustlers.

The Prime Minister should not be lecturing young people about sacrifice; he should be listening to them and hearing their stories.

Again I am going to ask, will the Prime Minister commit today to getting spending under control so young people can afford to get ahead in life?

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, opportunities for young people are exactly what the government is creating. Just yesterday in the member's riding, we announced a major project that is moving forward with two billion dollars' worth of investment that will create 18,000 jobs across Durham region, 3,700 of them full-time jobs, and provide clean power to 1.2 million Canadians.

Can the member opposite for Bowmanville—Oshawa North still stand up and actually support those opportunities for once?

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lestiguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Donald Trump has broken off talks. We are a long way from an agreement, despite the Liberal rescue promised during the election campaign.

Yes, some things are unpredictable, but other things are in Ottawa's control, including how we protect our people.

As yet, assistance for the lumber sector is still on hold. Three hundred jobs were lost at Paccar because of truck tariffs. Meanwhile, Ottawa is making cuts to measures that simplify access to EI.

With everything in Washington off the rails, what is the Prime Minister going to do to make sure that Quebeckers do not pay for this new setback?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always known that this would be a volatile situation. We are keeping a steady hand to continue supporting industry and workers.

We are making historic investments in supporting our workforce. For example, we have set aside \$5 billion for a strategic response fund.

We are signing agreements with other countries to build a strong economy.

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lestiguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the idea of diversifying our trade partnerships over the next 10 years, as the Prime Minister proposes, is a good one. However, for workers in our sawmills, at Paccar, at our aluminum smelters and steel plants, 10 years is forever.

The Prime Minister has an obligation to get results for Quebeckers now living with a sword of Damocles hanging over their heads. We need the diversification rhetoric to translate into contracts and job creation. Support for industries and workers has to be flexible and much more readily accessible.

When can we expect results?

• (1125)

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, Canada is ranked among the best places in the G20 to do business. We are strengthening our partnerships in Europe, in the Indo-Pacific region and in Africa.

That is why we signed a historic trade agreement with Indonesia to create jobs here, at home. This is not just about agreements; it is also about wages for Canadian families.

We are here to build a strong Canadian economy. Are they with us?

*Oral Questions***FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber industry does not have 10 years to wait for the Prime Minister and his economic diversification trips.

The Bloc Québécois is calling for a real rescue package for our forestry industry. To begin with, Ottawa needs to finally release the financial aid it has already promised. That would be a good start. On top of that, a wage subsidy is needed to protect workers and their employment relationships if layoffs do occur.

When will the federal government show the same urgency for Quebec's lumber industry as it does for Ontario's auto industry?

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian and Quebec softwood lumber built our country, from construction to real estate. However, as we know, U.S. tariffs are putting our workers and businesses at risk. That is why we are here. To offset the pressure from tariffs, we are making \$700 million available to softwood lumber companies through the Business Development Bank of Canada.

We will always be there for our workers and our softwood lumber companies.

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[English]

YOUTH

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, youth unemployment is nearing half a million people. That is the worst in 25 years, and that is the price that young Canadians are paying after 10 long years of Liberal failure. They have already sacrificed owning a home and starting a family. Food prices have skyrocketed. Housing starts in Toronto have fallen to a 30-year low.

Nonetheless, the Prime Minister stood before a room of students and told them to make even more sacrifices. He is blind to the realities facing young Canadians, stubbornly pushing the same failed policies.

When will the Liberals finally rein in their reckless spending so young Canadians can afford to dream again?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we talk about spending less to invest more, it is because we believe that we need to create prosperity for the younger generations of Canadians.

When we look at our track record, we see that housing starts are up under the Prime Minister, construction investment is up and wages are up, and we have created over 100,000 full-time jobs in the past month alone.

We have a responsible plan. We are just getting started. Young people are at the centre of the plan.

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the deficit is doubling. The Liberals are changing definitions so they can manipulate the results and confuse Canadians. They are not spending less.

Our youth are living with the fallout of failed policies. They cannot afford a home, and they are searching for jobs that no longer exist, while the Liberal government mortgages their future.

When will the government open its eyes to the struggles of young Canadians and deliver a responsible budget that does not burden them with generational debt?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in our budget, what people will see are the kinds of investments that are actually going to set young people on the right path forward, creating jobs, investing in skills and apprenticeships, investing in affordable homes and making it easier for young people to get into those homes.

Those are the kinds of investments we are making. When members on the opposite side of the House stand up and call things like our national school food program “garbage”, when it actually helps young Canadians get the best early start in life, we have to wonder whether they really care about youth.

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is shameful that the elitist Prime Minister would speak to university students about making sacrifices. Students have already sacrificed their dream of home ownership. They pay for the climbing cost of food. They are living paycheque to paycheque, that is if they can even find a job.

Will the Prime Minister rein in his out-of-control inflationary deficit so young Canadians can finally afford a home?

● (1130)

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, it is appalling that the member opposite is talking about sacrifices. Does the member know who makes sacrifices every day in this country? Our national police force does. My father spent 30 years serving on the Peel Regional Police force.

Recently we heard the Conservative leader call our national police force “despicable”. He called the men and women who serve our communities and keep them safe “despicable”, and he still does not have the good sense to stand up and apologize for such an appalling statement.

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they failed to answer the question.

Oral Questions

The members opposite have announced a new blue seal program and said that Canada has abundant opportunities for youth, but the facts tell a different story: Youth unemployment has risen by 14.7%, the highest since 2010, with employment levels now at their lowest since 1998. CIBC says that youth unemployment rates have climbed 5.5% since 2022.

Will the government stop congratulating itself and start helping youth find real jobs?

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, this is exactly what our government is doing by bringing prosperity to Canada, by making generational investments and by decreasing spending. Our economy is growing. We are creating tens of thousands of jobs.

The Leader of the Opposition calls major nation-building projects that create tens of thousands of jobs “pathetic”. On top of it, the Conservative members call a national school food program “garbage”. It is feeding kids across this country, giving them the best start. How can the Conservatives possibly claim to care about the next generation?

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the young Canadian families I know would like to be able to feed their kids themselves, not on a government hand-out.

On Wednesday the Prime Minister told a room full of students they need to make sacrifices, but young Canadians have already sacrificed enough under the Liberal government. They have sacrificed the dream of owning a home. They have paid the price at the pump and at the grocery store. They have endured summers without work and have a future saddled with debt. After 10 years of Liberal failure, Canadians have sacrificed enough.

When will the Liberals finally get their spending under control and restore hope for young Canadians?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me take an opportunity to shed some light on the Conservative youth plan, which borrows heavily from the MAGA playbook. It includes restricting student financial aid to the programs the Conservatives like and defunding the ones they do not like. With their track record, we should be worried about basic science, arts, literature, culture, environmental studies, public health and early childhood education.

Is the Conservatives' plan a path to defund those students? If so, what kind of future do they see for Canada's youth?

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly the member missed her leader's speech asking young Canadians to sacrifice, but here is a news flash: Because of the member's policies, they have already sacrificed enough. StatsCan data shows youth unemployment has climbed to nearly 15%, the highest it has been since 2010. Since the Prime Minister was sworn in, nearly 48,000 more Canadians have to rely on EI to pay their bills. This is not progress; this is Liberal decline.

How can the Liberal Prime Minister look young Canadians in the eye and ask them to sacrifice more, when it is his own Liberal MPs' failures that have taken away their jobs, their homes and their hope for their future?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are making generational investments into Canada to build this country strong for the next generation. We are building housing. We are investing in skills. We are building major projects to create jobs. Our plan is working. We are making progress. We have more to do. On November 4, Conservatives have the ability to stand up and support us as we build this country to make it better for all Canadians.

Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before the election, the Prime Minister said he could solve Canada's economic woes because he has a plan. This week, he finally revealed that plan to a roomful of young people. It turns out that the plan is that young people have to make sacrifices by giving up the dream of home ownership, paying higher prices at the grocery store and spending all summer unemployed.

If this was the Prime Minister's plan all along, why was he not honest with young people about the sacrifices he had in store for them?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing we know about the Conservatives is that they do not know shame. When I sat in opposition when the leader of the Conservative Party was a part of the government, they actually cut the summer student jobs program. How dare they try to say that we as a government do not support youth, when he sat around the cabinet table and did nothing but make cut after cut?

The young people of Canada know that the government has their back, and we will continue to do that. Come November 4, there is going to be a powerful stipend for the young people of Canada.

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• (1135)

[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Driver Inc. truckers are not just a danger to the public on our roads. They also pose a threat to Quebec workers.

Over the past three years, 1,000 Quebec truckers have lost their jobs. Meanwhile, the industry is booming in Ontario. In the last five years, 77% of new truckers in Canada have been part of the Driver Inc. scam.

We are losing our Quebec truckers to the benefit of Ontario companies that employ fake truckers who got their driver's licences from a Cracker Jack box. The Bloc Québécois has proposed 10 measures to solve this problem.

When will Ottawa take action?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, licensing is a provincial responsibility, so it is up to the provinces to take appropriate action.

We will stand up for truckers who deserve to receive fair wages and to be protected under the law. More than 1,000 inspections have been carried out, and truckers can confidentially report offences. We are protecting those who speak up. Our priority is to keep our roads and drivers safe.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec is already doing its job to solve the problem.

The chief coroner ordered a public inquiry, which the federal government is unwilling to do at this time. The Government of Quebec is going to equip highway traffic controllers with firearms. The Government of Quebec is going to make driver training mandatory. However, the problem comes from Ontario, not Quebec. Almost all the Driver Inc. drivers are from Ontario. Federal rules allow foreign workers to incorporate and allow companies to take advantage of them. Again, only Quebec is taking action, even though the problem lies with Ontario and the federal government.

When will Ottawa do its job?

[English]

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are protecting the trucking industry. We have taken steps to ensure that truck drivers have fair pay. We have taken steps to ensure that misclassification is made illegal; we are enforcing that more than ever. We continue to work with the provinces, especially with Quebec, on this issue. Our priority remains making sure that we are keeping our roads safe and that we are supporting our industries and our workers fairly.

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FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been 10 years, and the Liberals have failed to secure a softwood lumber agreement. In the meantime, over \$10 billion in tariffs and duties on Canadian lumber has been collected by the Americans. Thirty mills have been closed in B.C., and tens of thousands of Canadians have lost their jobs, over 2,700 in my riding alone. These are 2,700 families who cannot afford to put food on their table, 2,700 families who cannot afford to pay the bills at the end of the month, 2,700 families who have lost hope.

When will the forestry families become a priority for the Prime Minister?

Oral Questions

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we stand with affected communities and affected workers, and we have announced a number of supports: \$50 million for workers; \$700 million in liquidity supports, which are accessible through the banks that the mills are using right now; and \$500 million of innovation to come.

We know that this has been a very disruptive situation. This is a long-standing challenge with the United States. We are working with all levels to manage to resolve it. I welcome the feedback from the member opposite regarding plans that they would like to see.

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are hemorrhaging jobs, and they are offering a band-aid. Canadians do not want handouts; they want jobs. The forestry sector supports over 200,000 direct jobs in 300 forestry communities nationwide. That is more direct employment than Canada's steel, aluminum and automotive sectors combined.

The Prime Minister campaigned on negotiating a win with the U.S. Instead, since he took over, tariffs on Canadian softwood have tripled. When will the forestry families actually become a priority for him?

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we stand with B.C. communities. FPAC officials were in town this week with many industry leaders and many other governments. We meet with them, and we talked about what we could do in order to support them. I continue to work with the sector to make sure we are providing supports that are meeting the moment. I welcome the member opposite to provide those supports.

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THE ECONOMY

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Prime Minister said he would be judged by the prices that Canadians pay at the grocery store, and Canadians are paying the price. Food inflation is skyrocketing, up 4%. Liberal deficits are driving inflation. The more Liberals spend, the more it costs Canadians at the grocery store. Twenty-five per cent of Canadians are using food banks because they cannot afford to eat.

When will the Prime Minister finally get his inflationary deficits under control so that Canadians can put food on the table?

Oral Questions

• (1140)

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservative members pretend to care about food insecurity, but then they call feeding children “garbage”, which is completely unacceptable. Up to 400,000 more kids are getting healthy meals in their school. This is saving parents up to \$800 a year on their grocery bills. That is meaningful change. How can Canadians take the party opposite seriously when it literally wants to take food off kids’ tables and defund our food programs?

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is garbage is that answer. Hidden Liberal food taxes are worked into the sticker price of everyday essentials, driving up food costs. The new fuel standard is adding 17¢ a litre to the fuel that truckers use to get the food to the grocery store. The food packaging tax and industrial carbon tax are inflating grocery prices as well. They show up on the total cost on people’s receipt.

Will the Prime Minister reverse the hidden Liberal food taxes so that Canadians can afford to feed their families?

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, the reason the imaginary taxes the Conservatives are trying to invent do not appear on people’s grocery receipts is that they are not real. Let me officially welcome the Conservative Party to reality.

While the Conservatives try to invent imaginary taxes, we are busy cutting taxes and helping to make it easier for Canadians to file their taxes. We have cut income tax for 22 million Canadians, cut GST on new home purchases, repealed the consumer carbon tax and moved forward with automatic tax filing so that Canadians can get the benefits they deserve.

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*[Translation]***TRANSPORTATION**

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always the same thing with the Liberals. They keep paying lip service without ever doing anything about the Driver Inc. issue. Canadians, including the people of Beauce, are worried and want the government to ensure that our roads are safe.

We are talking about human lives here. It is unacceptable. It is high time the Liberals stand up, show some backbone and take responsibility.

My question for the Minister of Public Safety is this: What is the value of a human life?

[English]

Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our truck drivers do crucial work for our economy and for the quality of life of Canadians. They must be able to do this work safely not only for themselves but for all road users. We are closely monitoring the sit-

uation, and we will take the necessary measures to ensure that our truck drivers can work in reasonable conditions, protecting their safety and that of all Canadians.

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FINANCE

Hon. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has what the world wants and needs: the resources, ingenuity, technology and skills, to make us a clean energy superpower. Atlantic Canada is ready, willing and able. With budget 2025, we know that the government is making generational investments to ensure that our economy remains strong, focused and resilient. This historic budget will build on the work already started by the Major Projects Office, which is going to cut red tape and fast-track major nation-building projects as well.

Can the parliamentary secretary for finance tell us how budget 2025 and the Major Projects Office are helping to build Canada strong?

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, we are making generational investments that create well-paying jobs and grow our economy.

Yesterday, I was honoured to join the Prime Minister and the Premier of Ontario to announce support for OPG’s Darlington new nuclear project, located in my home of Durham Region. This important project will build four SMRs that will power 1.2 million households with clean energy, create 18,000 construction jobs and 3,700 careers, and add \$38.5 billion to Canada’s GDP over 65 years. That is how we build Canada strong.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning the Liberal Prime Minister had the audacity to say he is making significant progress in removing Donald Trump’s tariffs on Canada. Is he kidding me? We lost 3,000 auto jobs in Brampton and 1,200 auto jobs in Ingersoll, and that is just in the last 10 days. What an absolute slap in the face to auto workers that is.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister also recently said that Canadians have to make sacrifices. Why do the Liberals not actually confess that the sacrifice he is talking about is the entire Canadian auto industry?

• (1145)

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for months we have been drawing the distinction between things that we can and cannot control. We cannot control the trade policy of the United States or any other country. We can control what we do here at home.

We are building the strongest economy in the G7. We are doing that by reducing internal barriers to trade. We are doing that by supporting affected industries, including \$5 billion in the strategic response fund and helping to support workers across this country.

We ask the Conservatives, rather than talking Canada down, to stand with us.

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister needs to hear something: Auto workers want their jobs. They do not want handouts. They do not want to hear that we are making progress. They do not want to hear these bromides about standing up for Canada. What they want is to get back in the plant and do their jobs. They want to make the great cars they make.

What is the actual plan to get auto workers back in the factories and producing cars? What it looks like right now is that the Liberals are sacrificing the auto industry in a desperate and pathetic attempt to appease Donald Trump.

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the plan is to work with unions, to work with companies and to work with the provinces to have an alignment so that we can fight these unjustified tariffs.

The plan is to have a strategic response fund to support workers and businesses in this time of challenge for us. The plan is to change our emissions framework to make sure that Stellantis and GM know exactly what we are doing.

The plan is to continue to diversify our trade and continue to work with such companies as Linamar, whose CEO and chair, Linda Hasenfratz, said at committee this week that this is one of the most productive sectors in all of Canada.

Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal Prime Minister, Canada's biggest export to the U.S. has become well-paying auto jobs. Paycheques are vanishing. First it was Windsor, then Brampton, then Oshawa, then Ingersoll. Now people in my community are terrified that Cambridge will be next, with thousands of livelihoods hanging in the balance.

The Prime Minister admitted that he is unlikely to get a complete trade deal with the U.S., despite all his endless promises. He is full of talk but out of gas, and Canadians are left stranded. How many more jobs will get sent south because of his broken promises and negotiating failures?

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is important is that we all work together to fight these unjustified tariffs and to have a plan to respond. That includes the strategic response fund, the changes we have made to the remissions framework, diversifying our trade and

continuing to attract companies from all over the world to build right here in Canada. It includes listening to the words of Linda Hasenfratz, who said that the most productive factories she has of all the footprint in the world are right here in Canada. It includes working with the companies and workers and talking up our industry, not talking it down. It is not to talk down EVs but to say that we want these jobs here and we want these cars here. We will always be an auto-producing nation.

Fred Davies (Niagara South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Stellantis announced that Jeep production is moving from Brampton to Illinois, taking 3,000 Canadian jobs with it. The Liberals gave Stellantis up to \$10 billion in taxpayer money for an EV plant in Ontario but failed to secure job protection for its workers. They also did this with two EV plants in my riding: one that never opened and one that is still under construction.

Will this be another case of déjà vu? When will the Liberal government keep its word and stop the destruction of the auto sector in this country?

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, we have heard the recent news that some of our auto manufacturers have announced reductions in their production levels at Canadian facilities, and the government is extremely concerned and disappointed in those announcements. The Government of Canada is committed to maintaining a strong Canadian automotive industry, its footprint here in Canada, with the well-paying jobs that come with it.

The government expects these companies to respect their commitments toward Canada and their workers. We have adjusted the remissions framework to correspond with the reduction in those production levels. That is how we will protect our Canadian footprint for the automotive industry.

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[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Bernard Généreux (Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata, CPC): Mr. Speaker, rent in Quebec has jumped by almost 10%, which is double the national average over the past year. After 10 years of Liberal deficits, everything costs more; I have seen it with my own eyes and I am seeing it on the ground.

Oral Questions

Last week, at a gas station in La Pocatière, one of my constituents asked me why the Liberals are spending billions on things that do nothing to help her family, when she can no longer even pay her rent without having to cut back on groceries. Imagine that. It makes no sense.

What will the Prime Minister do to finally stop throwing money out the window and give Quebeckers some breathing room?

• (1150)

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is facing a housing crisis. Rent and mortgage costs are still unaffordable.

During the last election campaign, Canadians told us loud and clear that it is time to build. This means building housing at a pace not seen in generations. That is why we launched Build Canada Homes, a program focused on building and financing affordable housing at scale to meet the needs of Canadians across the housing spectrum.

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YOUTH

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a study has shown an alarming increase in anxiety and depression among our young people. Nearly one in four young people rate their mental health as poor and more than 80% experience constant stress about their future and finances.

At a time when economic uncertainty is taking its toll on young people, is it not a bit irresponsible of the Prime Minister to tell them that it is up to them to make sacrifices?

How can this government demand more sacrifices of a generation that is struggling under the weight of the inflation, insecurity and debt that are a direct result of this government's 10 years in power?

[English]

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives talk a big game about supporting young people and young families, but they voted against every single measure that actually helps them. Our government is delivering real results, from child care to national food programs and the Canadian dental care plan, which is now reaching more than five million Canadians and saving families \$800 a year. This is money that stays in Canadians' pockets while giving them timely access to quality care. We are lowering costs for young Canadians while the Conservatives are just lowering expectations.

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about one in five young people who feel as though they are in financial peril and who think about that every day.

Inflation is eating away at every dollar, and rent has increased by 10% in Quebec. It is not surprising to see our young people losing confidence in the future. One in four young people are experiencing psychological distress. This economic crisis is turning into a mental health crisis.

This week, the Prime Minister told our young people that they will have to make more sacrifices. Conversely, is it too much to ask the Liberal government to change course and give our children a better future?

[English]

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reason we are making generational investments in young people is that we believe they are the future. When we think about affordability today, it is also why we listen to groups like, for example, Right To Food, because it talks about the need to strengthen our social safety net, including affordable child care, dental care, the workers benefit and the child benefit. It is why we are introducing automatic tax filing for millions of Canadians. Our plan includes building homes young people can afford and building great jobs that are going to create opportunities for their future. This is how a responsible government tackles the challenge of building a great country.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the health minister revealed that she does not personally review supervised consumption site applications, so I am going to bring one to her attention. There is currently an application for review on her desk for a drug consumption site in Whitehorse, Yukon. Multiple day cares are located within steps of the site, and an elementary school is just 200 metres away. The health minister has the power to reject this application.

Will the minister protect the children, or will she approve another drug consumption site next to schools and day cares?

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no parent should worry about their child picking up a broken needle or a broken pipe. While evidence shows that safe consumption sites help reduce public drug use and stop the spread of infectious diseases, we recognize the impact these sites have on these communities.

As we continue to work with parents and partners to tackle this public health issue, service providers must engage with our communities and have mitigation measures in place to address community concerns about public safety.

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly, the health minister does not care that drugs are used next to children because she allows it to happen right across Canada. According to her own department, fentanyl is the drug used most in the consumption sites the Liberals continue to approve. In fact, fentanyl is used in over 48% of the visits to federally approved drug consumption sites.

Given that a few grains of fentanyl can kill someone, will the minister at least shut down the fentanyl consumption sites next to children, yes or no?

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that our government understands the devastating impact the drug and overdose crisis has had on families and communities in every corner of the country. I also want to continue to say that we will continue to work with partners across the board to tackle this public health crisis. I invite the member opposite to work with us on this instead of fighting us.

* * *

• (1155)

HEALTH

Shannon Miedema (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, women's health has consistently been a blind spot in our health care system. We use data to make critical decisions. When research fails to account for gender differences, the results are biased, and women pay the price. From heart attacks to endometriosis, from menopause to cancers, there is a lack of focused research and a deficiency in critical data.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health tell the House how the government is ensuring that Canada's health care system is working toward adequately serving this half of the population?

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at a time when women's rights are being rolled back around the world, Canada is moving forward. For too long, women's health has been under-researched, underfunded and too often dismissed. That is changing.

Our new government is closing data gaps, modernizing breast cancer screening and improving access to reproductive care, so women are heard, believed and supported, because a strong Canada depends on healthy Canadians, and when women are healthy, families and communities thrive.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, weeks ago, I asked how Gulfam Hussain, a Pakistani national, was allowed to enter Canada by the Liberals, in spite of being convicted in the United Kingdom for the following: "Adult sexual activity with a female child family member 13 to 17 - offender over 18 - penetration". He is also on the U.K.'s sex offender registry.

Can the Liberals tell Canadians whether they have deported this publicly listed, incestuous child sex abuser from Canada in the week since I last asked about him?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives never miss an opportunity to disrespect law enforcement, we will allow law enforcement members to do their job. We trust them to execute Canadian law, and we leave that matter in their hands.

Oral Questions

We also will not politicize, from start to finish, immigration policy in this country. In the lead up to the last election, the Conservative leader said we needed more immigration. In the lead up to the last election, he promised those who had expiring student permits that he would prevent them from being deported. That is irresponsible policy, but that is the Conservative way.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take that as a no, the Liberals have not deported the publicly listed, incestuous child sex abuser who should never have been allowed into the country in the first place because he was on a public sex offender registry in a G7 country. Let us listen to that answer. Why can the Liberals not say yes, people who commit crimes, who are non-citizens and who are inadmissible to this country, should be deported?

Has Gulfam Hussain been deported from Canada?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course those who break the law face the consequences of Canadian law, and we trust law enforcement to carry out its responsibilities.

I will reiterate that, in this country, we have an absolute opportunity to ensure that immigration policy is put on a solid footing. That is why the government is seized with ensuring sustainability in the immigration system and seized with ensuring that immigration policy is always about economic policy.

We centre ourselves on Canadian values. The Conservatives can play games with immigration for political purposes and support the Leader of the Opposition as he leads into the leadership review in January.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week the Prime Minister asked Canadians to sacrifice more. At the same time, the Minister of Immigration advertized Canada's free health care system on Twitter to bolster the already unsustainable level of immigration the Liberals have undertaken. They did this all while emergency rooms are overflowing and most people cannot access basic primary care or diagnostics. Seniors cannot access long-term care. This is not fair to anyone, including newcomers.

With the health care system barely being able to serve the people in Canada right now, will the Liberals apologize for falsely advertizing that Canada has the capacity to be the world's walk-in clinic?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that there are pressures in the Canadian economy and in Canadian society because of, among other factors, ensuring that we have a sustainable immigration system. That is exactly what the government is doing.

Oral Questions

In a few weeks' time, as the member knows because she is the critic for the Conservative party on immigration, there is a level of plan that will be presented. It will be sustainable. It will ensure that talent attraction is at the heart of the strategy.

I implore my colleagues, instead of politicizing questions of immigration, to put serious ideas on the floor that are, and I emphasize this, constitutional.

* * *

● (1200)

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Sima Acan (Oakville West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the auto sector is being hit hard by unjustified U.S. tariffs.

In my riding of Oakville West, Ford's Oakville assembly complex is the backbone of our local economy, employing over 4,000 skilled workers who continue retooling to keep production here at home in these challenging times. Last week, auto workers in Brampton, the GTA and across Canada were racked by the news that Stellantis is moving production of the Jeep Compass to the U.S. to avoid these tariffs.

Can the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Industry update the House on how we are fighting for our workers and our auto sector?

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for Oakville West for her consistent advocacy for auto workers in her community, especially at the Ford plant.

Let us be clear: The Stellantis decision to move production out of Brampton is unacceptable. Stellantis has made important commitments to Canada and to our workers, and we expect it to hold up its end of the deal. We expect it to hold up its commitments. That is exactly what the Minister of Industry wrote in her letter to the president of Stellantis, through which she summoned him as well as the Minister of Economic Development for Ontario and the head of Unifor. We have also announced that we will be limiting the number of vehicles Stellantis can import tariff-free.

We are holding Stellantis to account, and we will fight for our workers every single day.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister lectured a room full of students that they will have to make sacrifices, but they already have. They have sacrificed their dream of owning a home, watched food prices soar and are struggling to find work. Statistics Canada says one in four barely make ends meet. After 10 years of Liberal failures, Canadians are working harder but falling further behind.

Will the Liberals finally rein in their reckless spending so people can afford to live, eat and own a home again?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me show the contrast of a caring government and what

a caring government does. The Prime Minister, just a week ago, made an announcement about the national school food program, saying it is going to become a permanent program. Children in every region of the country will benefit from that program. We can contrast that to the Conservative response. As late as yesterday, we had a member disgracefully stand in the chamber to say that the program “is garbage”.

That is not caring for Canadians, and that is not caring for children, but the Liberals will continue to do so into the future.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the news came as a shock wave this morning: President Trump calls off trade negotiations with Canada. It is a blatant failure of this Prime Minister. After being elected as a master negotiator, he leaves us high and dry. He did everything to pander to Trump: border security, military spending, opening the Keystone XL pipeline and dropping the tax on web giants. He was practically on his knees in the Oval Office, as job losses mounted.

When will he stand up and come up with a real strategy to protect workers?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is not true. For months, we have been emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between what we can control and what we cannot control, including U.S. trade policy. We remain ready to resume negotiations with them.

However, we can take action here at home by launching national construction projects, by growing the Canadian economy by getting rid of internal barriers and diversifying our trade through the creation of new—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Winnipeg-Centre.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, or NAN, has declared a state of emergency amid rising violence, trafficking and gang crime, yet the federal government has not paid its share to ensure adequate policing. Liberals rush to exploit the Ring of Fire in NAN territory for so-called national interest but stay silent as its communities face danger.

Is the safety of indigenous people not of national interest? If the government truly cares about public safety, when will it address NAN's state of emergency?

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

Jacques Ramsay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone in Canada deserves to be safe and to feel safe, including our indigenous communities. We will ensure that they have the police services, resources and tools they need to deal with this crisis. We will fight crime and fight inequality in this regard. That is why Canadians elected us. That is why indigenous communities have confidence in us. We will be there. We are monitoring the situation. We will ensure that the crisis is resolved as quickly as possible.

* * *

[*English*]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

PETITIONS

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

John Williamson (Saint John—St. Croix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I table a petition from residents of my riding concerning charitable status. The petitioners are concerned about the finance committee's proposal to remove charitable status from churches and other religious organizations, a proposal supported by the Liberal MPs on the committee.

Petitioners note that the work done by these faith-based charities supports seniors and vulnerable people in communities right across Canada. They also note that removing their charitable status may cause many churches, especially in rural communities, to close their doors and abandon their support for marginalized and vulnerable Canadians. For this reason, petitioners are asking the federal government to reject this diabolical proposal and save charitable status for churches and religious groups, which is something I certainly support.

THERMAL COAL

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place, as always, representing the people of Saanich—Gulf Islands from the traditional territory of the W_SÁNEC nation. *Hych'ka Siam*.

The petitioners are concerned about the export of thermal coal from Canadian ports. This coal generally comes up from the United States, is shipped to the port of Vancouver and leaves from our port. Colleagues might ask why it does not leave from the U.S. ports. It

Routine Proceedings

is because the export of thermal coal down the west coast to the United States has been halted due to the concern of those governments over the climate crisis.

The Liberals promised to end the export of thermal coal in the 2021 election. There were measures that were about to be passed in Bill C-33, which died on the Order Paper.

The concerned citizens who have signed this petition are calling on the government to immediately put thermal coal on the priority substances list of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and, as soon as possible, regulate it to ensure that it is not exported from Canadian ports.

BRAIN CANCER

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition with respect to brain cancer research and treatments. The petitioners note that an estimated 27 Canadians are diagnosed with a brain tumour each day. Canada is years behind the U.S. in approving new drugs and treatments, and even when new brain cancer therapies are approved, there continues to be a shortage of brain cancer drugs in Canada, with some medications even being discontinued.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to increase funding for brain cancer research and work with the provinces and territories to ensure that drugs, medical services and new therapies are accessible and to remove unnecessary red tape so that brain cancer drugs can be approved more quickly.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to table a petition on behalf of Canadians who are deeply concerned about the worsening mental health and substance use crisis across our country, a crisis that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Petitioners note that too many Canadians are unable to access timely mental health or substance use supports. They point out that when care is not available in the community, people are left to rely on overcrowded hospital emergency rooms or primary care providers, while untreated or inadequately treated mental illness carries enormous social and economic costs.

The petitioners therefore call on the Government of Canada to take urgent action by legislating parity between physical and mental health in Canada's universal public health care system; ensuring timely access to evidence-based, culturally appropriate and publicly funded mental health and substance use services beyond hospital and physician settings; and, lastly, establishing the Canada mental health transfer to sustainably fund these services.

Privilege

The petitioners are clear: Canadians deserve a health care system where mental health is treated with the same urgency, priority and respect as physical health.

• (1210)

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the petition I am presenting today concerns recommendations 429 and 430 of the Standing Committee on Finance. These meetings happened a long time ago as pre-budget hearings, but because of the delay in the budget until the week after next, they are highly relevant. These recommendations were supported by the Liberal members of the finance committee but not, I note, by Conservative members of the committee.

The recommendations would single out a specific subgroup within the charitable sector, penalizing organizations that are based on moral stances different from those of the governing party in the country and effectively taking away their charitable status.

A fact pointed out by the petitioners is that faith-based charities represent the majority of charitable spending and community activity in Canada. These include such things as community services and ministries, food banks, soup kitchens, refugee resettlement, climate and social justice initiatives, day cares, schools, hospitals, pregnancy care, long-term homes and palliative care centres. Replacing these would require many billions of dollars and would be enormously socially disruptive. It is based, frankly, on anti-religious bigotry.

They oppose these measures and so do I.

Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to present a petition today on behalf of concerned residents of Regina and southern Saskatchewan. The signatories of the petition are concerned about a recent finance committee recommendation to revoke the charitable status of religious organizations. They feel that faith-based charities do good work in our communities, as secular charities do, and oppose the revocation of charitable status in the Liberal government's upcoming budget or at any other time in the future.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to present this petition here today in the House of Commons.

* * *

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.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I gave the Speaker notice this morning about a question of privilege that I take no pleasure in rais-

ing today. It has come to my attention that an officer of Parliament, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, appears to have exceeded the authority vested in him by the House.

Yesterday afternoon, I had occasion to browse the website for the commissioner's office, something that I do periodically as the official opposition shadow minister for ethics and accountable government. In doing so, I was looking at the forms that members of the House are expected and required to use. Specifically, I was looking at the one to report gifts or benefits. I noticed at the bottom that the form was dated October 2025. That struck me as odd, so I did some additional digging. From there, one could find that the form concerning members' sponsored travel was also, suspiciously, dated October 2025.

One may be wondering why that date would raise any suspicion. It is, of course, October 2025. It is because the House has laid down a very specific procedure to be followed in the proposal, consideration and approval of forms used to administer the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons. Part of that procedure involves the House approving the forms. That is done on the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, and I certainly do not recall the House voting this month on any proposals by the Ethics Commissioner.

In case it might have been some sort of stylistic formatting change, I obtained copies of what the House last approved and what it had actually approved. The two forms I cited were approved by the House on March 7, 2016. That was when it concurred in the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which had been presented the same day.

The differences between the forms as published on the commissioner's website and what was approved by the House are not stylistic or cosmetic; they are, in fact, substantial. This is, of course, troubling, especially since the problem does not stop there. There is at least one more form, the "Disclosure Statement for Members and their Family Members", on the commissioner's website, which appears to be substantially different from what the House approved on January 27, 2009, when it concurred in the second report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which was tabled that same day.

I recognize that it might seem odd to be upset or rising today about the forms the commissioner draws up to administer the conflict of interest code, but the fact of the matter is that the House has laid down a very specific and precise procedure in this regard. Section 30 of the code specifies:

(1) The commissioner shall submit any proposed procedural and interpretative guidelines and all forms relating to the code to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for approval....

(2) Any guidelines and forms approved by the committee shall be reported to the House and shall come into effect when the report is concurred in by the House....

(3) Until the guidelines and forms are reported to the House, they shall remain confidential.

This was a deliberate policy choice made by the House. This is worth underlining. The procedure and House affairs committee explained this in June 2007, at paragraphs 29 and 30 of its 54th report:

29. Section 30 of the Code requires the Commissioner to submit “any proposed rules for the administration of this Code” to the Committee. Following approval by the Committee and the House, the rules may come into effect. It has never been entirely clear what documents were intended to be covered by this provision. The Committee recommends amending the section to refer to “procedural and interpretative guidelines and all forms relating to the Code.” It is intended that this change will provide more guidance to the Commissioner, as well as codifying the current expectation that forms should be approved.

30. The Committee also recommends adding a provision requiring guidelines and forms to remain confidential until reported to the House.

● (1215)

The House concurred in these recommendations and others on June 11, 2007, and that has been the rule of the House ever since. Our Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons is, formally, appendix 1 to the Standing Orders of the House. As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition explains, at page 226, “The establishment of the Code is a manifestation of the House’s right to regulate its internal affairs and to discipline its Members for misconduct.” That is, of course, an extension of the House’s collective privileges.

In publishing these new forms outside the procedures laid down by the House, the commissioner has, I respectfully submit, disobeyed the lawful orders of the House and defied its authority. These actions, as Bosc and Gagnon observe at pages 81 and 82, are considered to be contempts of Parliament. As the United Kingdom’s leading procedural authority, Erskine May, in the 25th edition, points out, at paragraph 15.7, “Contempts can be committed by disobedience to general rules”.

Questions of privilege concerning officers of Parliament, even the Ethics Commissioner, are not unprecedented. For example, on October 6, 2005, Mr. Speaker Milliken found, as stated at page 8473 of the Debates, a *prima facie* case of privilege in relation to the then ethics commissioner’s media interviews disclosing an investigation he was undertaking about a member, in apparent disregard of the Code’s requirements to provide the subject of an investigation with reasonable written notice and to conduct an investigation in private.

In the procedure and House affairs committee’s subsequent assessment of the case, in the committee’s 51st report, tabled in November 2005, we might read, at paragraph 14:

...members of the Committee are very disturbed at what was heard about the operation of the Office of the Ethics Commissioner, and, in particular, the handling of complaints and investigations. We are concerned about an apparent absence of rigour in the Office in the development of proper processes. This has resulted in the lack of attention to detail and the requirements of due process in this case. It appears to us that the Office of the Ethics Commissioner is not sufficiently familiar with the provisions of the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons, nor is the Office meticulous in ensuring that these provisions are observed in both their letter and their spirit. Within the Office, there appears to be an unacceptable confusion or blurring of the distinctions between the Conflict of Interest and Post-Employment Code for Public Office Holders, which...[was the predecessor of the current Conflict of Interest Act] and the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons.

Privilege

These observations were made, I should note, 20 years ago next month. In any event, the Committee went on to conclude, at paragraph 38, “The Committee wishes to place on the record its concern that the procedures and processes under the Code need to be much more...scrupulously followed to ensure this kind of experience is not repeated. The risks to Members, and the very integrity of the Code, demand nothing less.”

The concern today is about forms, and I appreciate that this might superficially seem to be a minor matter. The fact is that when the House adopts its rules and orders, it reasonably expects compliance. In a ruling delivered on April 19, 1993, Mr. Speaker Fraser, at page 18105 of the Debates, endorsed the opinion that “the disregard of that legislative command, even if unintentional, is an affront to the authority and dignity of Parliament as a whole and of this House in particular.”

The Chair then added, for his own part:

The statutory laws which have been agreed to by Members of this House do serve a purpose and are meant to be respected...

The requirements contained in our rules and statutory laws have been agreed upon by this House and constitute an agreement which I think all of us realize must be respected.

● (1220)

Sir John Bourinot put it more pointedly in *Parliamentary Procedure and Practice in the Dominion of Canada*, fourth edition, at page 203: “Each house is bound by every consideration of self-interest and justice to observe strictly its rules and standing orders, and to rebuke every attempt to evade or infringe them.”

We have seen a troubling pattern in recent years: The government, including the public service, feels at liberty to defy the authority of the House of Commons, especially when it comes to document production orders, but this pattern of disrespect has been spreading. It is a contagion, and it has gone beyond the executive in recent years.

We all recall the scene at the bar last year when Mr. Kristian Firth was admonished for trifling with the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. When Parliament was prorogued this past January, the House was seized with the *prima facie* questions of privilege concerning the committee shenanigans of Steven Anderson and Lauren Chen. Members will also recall the now-famous scandal of the other Randy.

It is distressing that this has spread from the executive to the public service and now to members of the public. What I am worried about is that we might now be seeing it with officers of Parliament, officers of the House, joining the ranks of the people who failed to appreciate the authority of the House of Commons, which is the beating heart of Canada’s democracy.

Should you agree, Mr. Speaker, that the question amounts to a *prima facie* case of privilege, I intend to move a motion to refer the matter to the procedure and House affairs committee.

Privilege

Rules are not suggestions, especially not in the ethics business. It may well be that this was an innocent misunderstanding, or maybe it was a deliberate thumbing of the nose at the authority of the House. We do not know. Since the commissioner cannot address the House, we should afford him the opportunity to speak to the issue at committee to account for himself and his office before judgment is pronounced.

We have to be vigilant in defending the rights of the House, and that is why, though some found it uncomfortable, we called the head of the Public Health Agency of Canada to the bar for defying an order of the House and why we called to the bar Mr. Firth for his unacceptable conduct before a standing committee of the House.

We have seen recently, though we are in early days in a new Parliament, that the Prime Minister's Office did not respond in good faith to the document production order passed by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics by the deadline prescribed by the committee. We keep hearing that there is a new government, but it seems like a case of history repeating itself.

I mentioned that we are early in the current Parliament, so our effort at the committee was to extend to the Prime Minister and to his department, the PCO, the opportunity to come good on the document production order at committee by next week. However, the bottom line and the fact of the matter is that, like in the earlier case, should they not respect the authority and the privileges of the highest court in the land, they will find themselves in contempt.

• (1225)

This is an opportunity, with the motion that I am prepared to move, should you, Mr. Speaker, find that there is a *prima facie* case of privilege, to take the issue to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the committee responsible for it, and the commissioner could explain how we found ourselves here today.

The bottom line is that no one should get a free pass.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the very first I have heard of anything of this nature. I will come back to the House with comments if it is deemed necessary.

Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not know that the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes would be rising on this question of privilege, but it is a very important point he raises.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the problem the member is pointing out to the House is a long-standing one. It did not begin with the present commissioner; it goes back certainly to his predecessor, Mario Dion, who violated and acted in contempt of the code on a number of occasions.

Before I get to that, I will say that I have personal knowledge of a number of the things that have been referred to by the hon. member with relation to the history of the code. I served for 15 years on the procedure and House affairs committee, which I think is a record. I do not think anyone here has ever served that long on that, or any other, committee.

I was on the committee when we adopted the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons, and I was there for various amendments. I chaired a subcommittee dealing with gifts and where that issue fits into the code. I also dealt with and was part of the writing of the report in which we concluded that Commissioner Shapiro was indeed guilty of contempt of Parliament in his actions. There were very serious consequences of the unauthorized investigatory activities he undertook, including devastating consequences for people who were not members of Parliament. Mr. Speaker, you can read the report to learn more about that.

When I say that this is part of a pattern that goes back to Commissioner Dion, what I am referring to is the use of unauthorized forms, which includes other forms that the House has never seen. I will give an example. I do not know how many of the forms exist, but one form that Commissioner Dion put out is a non-disclosure agreement.

When the Commissioner Dion would conduct an inquiry into a member of Parliament, his office would submit a non-disclosure form, which he told them they were required to sign, because we are all required, under section 27(8) of the code, which states: "Members shall cooperate with the commissioner with respect to any inquiry." If the commissioner started investigating someone, they would be required to co-operate.

Part of this co-operation, in the commissioner's mind, was signing a form, a non-disclosure agreement, about the way in which he conducted an investigation. This ensured that if he engaged in any abuses of his investigatory power, a person had no recourse and would not be able to speak out against what he had done.

I think this is an absolutely outrageous abuse. It is part of a pattern of administrative justice in this country, in which all the normal protections that exist under the criminal law or civil law are stripped away when it is an administrative matter. This is a fundamental problem we see not just with this commissioner or the previous one, but also with the integrity commissioners, for example, running Ontario's municipalities, where there is widespread abuse, to the point that the integrity commissioners have, frankly, less integrity than the people they are investigating.

The non-disclosure form would then be used to silence the member, who would be unable to say how the investigation had been conducted or whether the commissioner had gone too far.

I was never the subject of an inquiry from the commissioner, but I did have the experience of, again, the commissioner's acting in contempt of Parliament, in sending me a letter in 2020, at the height of the pandemic. I cannot remember the exact date I got the letter, but I believe it was in September 2020. The letter effectively said, "I was approached by a member of the public who tells me that you may have used your office for the benefit of a family member. You have a limited amount of time to convince me otherwise. If you don't satisfy me, I will launch an inquiry."

The nature of the evidence he then cited justifying his course of action included a number of documents I had written. One of them was an email I had sent to members of the council of a rural township where my wife was involved in a zoning dispute. I had sent an email to them asking them to conduct themselves in a certain way regarding the zoning.

• (1230)

It was addressed to a limited number of individuals. Only those people, our lawyer, my wife and I had seen this letter, so I knew he was taking this from an opposed party in an ongoing legal dispute and decided to weigh in on a private legal dispute on one side based on an anonymous denunciation. To this day, I still do not know who the anonymous denouncer might have been, although, as I pointed out to the commissioner, it was clearly one of a limited number of people: the members of the council, their senior staff or their lawyer. I could list off the names. One of them was formerly a staffer to the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands who had engaged in a similar action against her when he worked for her. I have a suspicion it is that individual, a man named Rob Rainer, but I do not know for sure.

Initiating an inquiry on his own initiative or on the basis of an anonymous denunciation is not permitted under the Standing Orders, under the conflict of interest code. Here is how the commissioner may engage in an inquiry. Subsection 27(1) says:

A member who has reasonable grounds to believe that another member has not complied with his or her obligations under this code may request that the commissioner conduct an inquiry into the matter.

Alternatively, subsection 27(3) says:

The House may, by way of resolution, direct the commissioner to conduct an inquiry to determine whether a member has complied with his or her obligations under this code.

There is no other mechanism for initiating investigations. Anonymous denunciations are not listed as one of the bases for doing this.

I could have pointed that out to the commissioner, but he was in the process of beginning an investigation that, to me, could have resulted in the destruction of my career, so I was not in a position to fight back on technicalities. We went out and collected all of the evidence required, including going through our financial records and numerous legal documents, and in the end, he concluded that my wife had no financial interest in the matter and that I was therefore not guilty of misusing my office. By the way, the way I had misused my office, to be clear, was that I had sent an email from the email address scottreidmp@gmail.com, and he concluded that this represented a misuse of my office because it implied that I was a member of Parliament. That implication and the authority of Parliament somehow represented a misuse.

To say the mere mention that a member is an MP represents a misuse of their office is a ludicrous interpretation, which he previously used in the investigation of the member for Ottawa West—Nepean. He found her guilty of acknowledging that she was an MP when she was campaigning for her husband, who was running for Ottawa city council. It was a crazy interpretation of the code to say that people knowing she was a member of Parliament while her husband ran for public office represented an abuse of the code. The

Privilege

fact that her husband was going from a higher-paying job to a lower-paying one as an Ottawa city councillor, thereby making it a negative financial interest, was of no concern to the commissioner, who was simply looking for a way to find her guilty of something to justify himself and his salary.

It was an outrageous pattern of behaviour that he repeated again when he went after the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore. Members can read both his report and my views on his report on my website. It was a vindictive attack on the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore just because he did not like the way the member was behaving. This kind of personal, petty vindictiveness creeping into an officer of Parliament so they can take advantage of the fact that there are no procedural protections for members of Parliament and abuse their authority is an outrage and should be dealt with.

In the event that one member asks the commissioner to investigate another member, it can happen that the commissioner looks into it and says ultimately that it was frivolous, that the member's name was dragged through the mud for nothing. When I was on the procedure and House affairs committee, we changed the code to say that when an investigation is undertaken, both the commissioner and the member who made the accusation have to stay quiet so they cannot damage a person by launching an investigation right before an election, for example. This was put into the code in subsection 27(6):

If the commissioner is of the opinion that a request for an inquiry was frivolous or vexatious or was not made in good faith, the commissioner shall so state in dismissing the request in a report under section 28(6) and may recommend that further action be considered against the member who made the request.

• (1235)

That was done, by the way, when Charlie Angus launched a frivolous accusation against another member.

This is great if an MP does it, but I did not get that right, because some anonymous person anonymously denounced me to a commissioner who kept protecting their identity after the fact, after finding out the whole thing was frivolous. I apologize for revealing a confidential conversation, but when I spoke to the member for Ottawa West—Nepean, I talked to her about how much it cost me in legal bills to fight this. I said that I am very fortunate; I have extraordinarily fortunate financial circumstances. The \$40,000 in legal fees it cost me to fight this was something I could sustain. She said she had to pay a whole bunch too.

The commissioner gets a salary for doing this stuff. She and I, and I assume the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, had to pay out of our own pockets for this. If a member is not independently wealthy, the investigation itself can ruin them, even if it is completely vexatious.

This is an outrage that exists throughout the administrative justice system in Canada, federal and provincial. It exist right here, and it is time to cut out this cancer.

Government Orders

• (1240)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I thank the members for Lanark—Frontenac, Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes and Winnipeg North for their interventions. The Chair will take this under advisement and report back to the House in due course.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (2025), as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was a bit surprised at the Bloc's take on the issue. The member's argument seemed to be that, because the majority of the standing committee allowed the amendment the Bloc and the Conservatives worked together on to pass at committee, the House of Commons does not have the right to make a change. As we know, the House of Commons does have a right to do that.

Even though the government has a minority in seats, if the majority of the members vote in one direction, does the member believe the standing committee should accept it?

[Translation]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lestiguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague the following question: What is the purpose of parliamentary committees?

I understand what my colleague is saying, and of course, the House is sovereign in its votes, but the committee, which includes members of recognized opposition parties, worked hard to improve the bill.

Today, the government is trying to undermine the work of the committee by joining forces with an unrecognized opposition party. Of course, that party has the right to have its say, but should that mean completely undoing all of the committee's work?

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, common-sense amendments were passed in committee. The NDP is now seeking to overturn them, even though it is not recognized as an official party in the House. That is not fair. What does my colleague think?

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for asking her question in my language.

Obviously, that is basically what we are saying. My fear is that this is going to make the entire process futile and pointless. In other words, we will meet in committee, decide on certain things, then return to the House and tear up everything we did.

I think we need to find a way to include the amendments we have proposed. These are reasonable amendments that promote transparency. If we are going to welcome 150,000 new citizens over the next few years, it would make sense to be able to enlighten

the House and the entire population on the impact this bill is going to have. This is quite important.

What we are asking for is accountability and transparency. It seems to me that everyone should agree on that.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think that my colleague's speech laid out our basic argument quite clearly.

As far as the numbers go, we disagree with representatives of the NDP and the government on the amount people this would affect. However, if there is one person held in high regard by all members of the House, that would be the Parliamentary Budget Officer. He said that a lot more people would be affected than the Liberal Party or the NDP seem to be letting on.

Can my colleague shed some light on that for us?

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, indeed, we support the principle behind Bill C-3.

In the course of our work and research, we realized that, of course, wrongs need to be made right, and we agree in principle, although the impact of this could be quite significant. That is what the Parliamentary Budget Officer told us. Up to 150,000 more people could become Canadian citizens unless we establish guidelines. At the least, we need to know what the future will look like once the bill is passed.

In the meantime, we think that the guidelines we are proposing will help correct injustices, as long as the parent of the person born abroad was living in Canada for three of the five years preceding that person's birth. We consider that entirely reasonable.

• (1245)

[English]

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 address the legislation through its amendments. I hope I can provide some clarification as to why we are here today having this particular debate.

It is important to recognize that amendments and changes were made to the Citizenship Act under the former government, a Conservative government that the leader of the Conservative Party was very prominent in. Through the Ontario Superior Court, we found out it was in violation of rights. Ultimately, we are here today because of a Superior Court order about an issue that Bill C-3 is attempting to resolve.

We have a deadline. The court has indicated that as long as we can pass the legislation by November 20, then the system will in essence stay intact. I have been working in the area of immigration and citizenship for many years, and I really believe something of great significance has been overlooked or, at the very least, not talked about enough.

There are three ways in which one acquires citizenship. The first is the most common and recognized way; a person is born, raised and lives in Canada, as is the case for a high percentage of members in the House.

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Another way is through naturalization. Ultimately, naturalization means that individuals are able to come to Canada through some form of an immigration stream. The numbers have fluctuated over the years. Many individuals have been permanent residents in Canada for years but have never taken the next step to get their citizenship, for all sorts of reasons.

For those who do make the decision to pursue their citizenship, which is the majority, there is a 1,095-day qualification in order to get that citizenship. I acknowledge that there is a certain time frame around that number, but these are individuals who have never set foot in Canada in the form of having a successful permanent resident application, which is a very important qualifier. A person can be in Canada as a visitor almost indefinitely. Typically it is a six-month return; people go back to their home country, and then they might come back for another visit. We encourage people to come visit our great lands from coast to coast to coast. This is a positive thing, but it does not count toward a person's citizenship. In order to acquire naturalization, people have to go through a process that sees them being in Canada, after being a permanent resident, for a minimum of 1,095 days.

The third way a person can be a citizen of Canada, and this is where the contention seems to be, is through descent. I will give a very specific example. There are literally thousands of Canadians who serve abroad in order to serve Canadians here in Canada. I am referring to our military personnel and foreign service, and these are just some national government-related positions. There are many international companies rooted here in Canada, headquartered in Canada, with individuals working outside the country in one way or another.

• (1250)

I will try to simplify this. I want members to imagine I am a civil servant working in the embassy, in the foreign service, and I am now posted to country X. While I am in country X, I have a child. That child is not born in Canada but is born in, let us say, Germany. Being part of the foreign service as a diplomat, I might be there for a number of years. I could possibly come back to Canada, or I could stay on a foreign deployment for a number of years, as many bureaucrats will.

Let us say my son or daughter is the age of majority and has an opportunity in the country I was posted to, decides to stay there and, ultimately, has children of his or her own. I end up coming back to Canada, whether I have retired or my posting brings me back to Canada. What the Conservatives are saying, along with the Bloc, is that if my son or daughter has a child, that child cannot be a Canadian. I am suggesting that my grandchild should be entitled to be a Canadian.

In terms of facilitating some sort of a connection, we do have, within the legislation, that there should be evidence of a substantial connection. That substantial connection is 1,095 days. I referred to 1,095 days a few minutes ago. If my son was to maintain that relationship with Canada and have that substantial connection, then why should my grandchild not be able to have the opportunity to call Canada home? This is where we differ. I do not quite understand the opposition to that.

They will take the extreme position, which, I would suggest, is a bit of an exaggeration. Is it possible? All sorts of things are possible, but is it justifiable in order to prevent a second generation from being able to come to Canada as Canadian citizens? Some may argue and ask, why could they not just reapply to become a Canadian? As we all know, it is not as simple as that.

Canada is recognized around the world as one of the countries, I would say the country, to come to, with the strongest reputation today and over past years. There are far more people who want to come to Canada and call Canada home than we can sustain. When we look at immigration and the issue we are talking about today, I think it is reasonable for us to support this because we can still have integrity within our immigration system. We have the flexibility.

The Prime Minister has been very clear on the immigration file and the need to bring stability to it. With Bill C-3, we are empowering Canadians abroad to become Canadians. I see that as a positive thing.

• (1255)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing we have not talked about today in this debate is the fact that there may be an additional 150,000 or possibly more citizens. The Liberals really do not know how many there would be.

One problem from an elections point of view is that, according to Elections Canada, these people who would be citizens living outside the country can decide which riding their vote is going to count in. There is no mechanism for Elections Canada to know where they were when they spent their 1,095 days. This problem does not have a solution yet. As we know, some ridings are won by 80 votes or 500 votes, so 150,000 people could be a consideration there.

I wonder if the member has a proposed solution from the Liberal government.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely confident in Elections Canada's ability to ensure that we have fair elections in every region of our country. I would like to think that the collective confidence we should have in Elections Canada would allow us to proceed with what Bill C-3 is proposing without concern about any impact it would have on the election, because of some sort of fear factor. I believe that issue can and will be addressed.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite what the government refuses to say, the Parliamentary Budget Officer tells us that this bill should allow 150,000 new people to vote. These are people who do not live here.

We wanted to propose amendments to limit the scope of this bill. Second-generation individuals who do not live here, who live abroad but were born to Canadian parents, are required to have resided in Canada for three years in order to obtain citizenship. We proposed that this requirement be five years instead. This is the same criterion that applies to permanent residents who want to obtain citizenship.

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Why is the government refusing to use the same rules that apply to new citizens for people who live abroad?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the legislation requires a substantial connection to Canada with respect to the 1,095 days. That is not necessarily within the five years.

I have had the opportunity to work with literally hundreds if not thousands of individuals who are permanent residents and who contribute immensely to our economy in every significant way that matters. At the end of the day, having that substantial connection to Canada alleviates that particular concern.

With respect to the overall numbers that are out there, just because one can throw a number out does not necessarily mean everyone is going to be flooding in to get their Canadian citizenship. I do not believe we should be denying individuals through a generation, saying that, no, they cannot be identified as Canadians even though they have a substantial connection to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, my question is simple. Serious work was done in committee. The Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois proposed some amendments. Now the government is joining forces with the NDP to get rid of all the amendments and all the work done in committee.

I know that a party that does not sit on committees and is not recognized in the House is allowed to propose amendments, but normally, when amendments are brought forward at report stage, they must be amendments on subjects that have not already been discussed.

Why is the House proceeding in this manner when we have worked hard on these issues and discussed them?

• (1300)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would caution the member about diminishing the importance and the sense of equality among members of Parliament who are on the floor of the House. He might not necessarily like it, but there are five political entities inside the House, and all individual members of the House are due equal respect.

Fred Davies (Niagara South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise in the House today to speak to this stage of Bill C-3.

Canadian citizenship is one of the most valuable possessions on the face of earth. I know, without a doubt, that no one in this chamber would trade, diminish or relinquish their Canadian citizenship for any price, any prize or any thing. We believe, with good reason, that Canadian citizenship is perhaps the most valuable asset in the world.

The spirits, the legacy and the sacrifice of those who fought to protect the value of Canadian citizenship are with us here today in this chamber as we consider important changes to the processes and

pathways to gaining the most valuable asset in the world, becoming Canadian. We have a sacred obligation to respect their ultimate sacrifice for our democracy.

Let me preface this by saying that my citizenship in this country derives from brave people who came here three generations ago from England, Wales and Italy. They came here looking for a better life.

Canada represented, for them, a new frontier, where there was hope, opportunity and a promise that hard work and a commitment to Canada would give them a good life. For me, I owe them everything. I stand here today in this magnificent place of Canadian democracy because of the path and opportunities they gave me as a proud Canadian. While the times were different then, the objectives were the same. They never thought Canadian citizenship was easy. It was hard. They made their way by supporting the ideas of peace, order and good government.

The original text of the bill would have opened the floodgates to people with no serious connection to Canada, either through loose lineage or lived experience here, which was our biggest problem with the legislation. When I was asked to join the citizenship and immigration committee, one of the first pieces of legislation we saw was this bill.

Conservatives support several aspects of this legislation and argued at committee for some changes. We were successful in improving the bill, although questions remain. Will the Liberals recognize the improvements we made to the bill, or will they impose a view that seriously diminishes the value and pathway to becoming a Canadian?

Fundamentally, one big question faces the House at this pivotal time in defining the value of being a Canadian: Is it reasonable for anyone who wants to become Canadian to be required to demonstrate a substantial connection to Canada? I say it is absolutely reasonable, but the Liberals have come up with this idea that foreign-born individuals who have never lived here could gain citizenship just because a parent spent a few months here a few years ago.

Now, I know my Liberal colleagues will say that I am simplifying the scenario, but I know that my immigrant grandparents would be appalled at this concept as a serious option to become a Canadian. This is chain migration without an adequate connection to our country, and it creates a two-tiered system where those who never lived here get the same rights as those who worked hard to earn their Canadian citizenship.

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Canadian citizenship should not be inherited as a chattel, an heirloom or a convenient hedge against political or social circumstances elsewhere. Being Canadian takes commitment, not convenience. As one witness said, “There is no benefit derived from having non-contributing citizens living abroad, not paying taxes, but just using a Canadian passport for their convenience and parachuting into Canada when they need assistance.”

Canadian citizenship is not a prize. Canadian citizenship is not a hand-me-down. Canadian citizenship is not an asset to be kept in a safe to be used from time to time. Canadian citizenship is also not a loosely connected generational thread for people who have no understanding of what it means to be Canadian and who do not know the generosity of Canada, the magnificence of Canada, the splendour of our Great Lakes, the majesty of our Rocky Mountains, our linguistic duality and the struggles of building this country across vast distances and impossible terrain.

The most egregious aspects of the original legislation allowed for loosely connected generational individuals to gain citizenship without official language proficiency, security checks against criminal activity or a basic understanding of Canadian history, a test that everyone else seeking citizenship would need to take before being granted the right to enjoy the most valuable asset in the world, which is being a Canadian.

• (1305)

Even the Liberals will grudgingly acknowledge that they screwed up the immigration system over the past 10 years. With over three million temporary residents and half a million undocumented persons now living in Canada, continuing to allow temporary residents' descendants to automatically claim citizenship will deeply impact Canada's immigration system, housing, jobs and social services.

There are parts of the bill that Conservatives clearly support. We support fixing that glitch in the immigration process that resulted in the so-called lost Canadians, who, through an unintended change in citizenship law, were denied automatic and rightful access to citizenship.

My colleagues on the committee and I worked tirelessly over the past months to study Bill C-3, and we proposed reasonable amendments. One of the most significant amendments was on citizenship by descent and citizenship by adoption. Under the changes approved at committee, a person cannot be granted citizenship by descent or adoption if neither of their parents, who are Canadian citizens, had not been physically present in Canada for at least 1,095 days during any period of five consecutive years before the person's birth. I know that sounds a little complicated, but there it is.

We also passed amendments on language and knowledge. These reinforce the purpose of a Canadian identity and ensure that those who wish to apply for citizenship, either by descent or adoption, have a connection to Canada's history and one of its official languages. We also passed amendments requiring security checks to ensure Canada is welcoming people who have a good track record, not a criminal one.

Requiring 1,095 days of physical presence in Canada over the course of 5 years, a clear language, knowledge of Canada's history

and proper security screenings with annual checkups by the ministry would ensure that new Canadian citizens are truly prepared to embrace the rights, responsibilities and values of our beautiful nation. These are not burdensome hurdles. They are safeguards that uphold the integrity of our citizenship system.

Niagara South is a border riding. This past week, I had the opportunity to talk to both the immigration and public safety committees, and in the House, about how we manage the flow of goods and people across one of Canada's busiest borders. The Peace Bridge in Fort Erie sees over \$50 billion a year of trade across the arch of that iconic bridge linking Canada to the U.S. We know we have problems with our entire immigration system. My constituents are very much aware of these issues and have told me that citizenship should not be handed out like playing cards.

When I was elected as a Conservative member of Parliament, I made a commitment to the people of Niagara South that I would hold the government to account and ensure common sense would prevail. The amendments made to Bill C-3 represent the values of what it means to be a Canadian and the sacred trust embodied in it. They also make common sense.

I encourage my Liberal colleagues to accept our reasonable changes to the Bill. They reflect careful consideration and illustrate that we can compromise and make legislation better, something the Liberals asked us to do. Well, we have, and now this legislation is before us. I encourage the Liberals to accept our amendments to protect the most valuable asset in the world, which is Canadian citizenship.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a very specific example of a foreign diplomat who serves abroad and has a child. That child makes the determination, after a number of years, to stay in another country and starts a family. They are still passionate about Canada, they still travel to Canada, they demonstrated that they do have an interest and meet that 1,095 days, but the parent of that child now has a child, so they have their grandparents living in Canada.

Is the member prepared to say that he does not support foreign affairs and people in the Canadian forces being able to pass citizenship down to their grandchildren?

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• (1310)

Fred Davies: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member paints the narrative as though Canada is somehow discriminating against Canadians. Every nation puts limits on the number of generations that can apply for citizenship. It is not unreasonable to put in a generational limit. Chain migration immigration is not an option that any country supports.

This legislation would provide a pathway in perpetuity for many generations of people who may never have set foot in this country, except that their parents or their grandparents may have spent five years here. I just cannot support that. There have to be limits. Not everyone can just become a Canadian because they want to.

Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for bringing up just what the Liberal government has done to our immigration system. It was globally recognized as likely one of the best economic and immigration systems around the globe for decades. There is one thing I was not really surprised by, but I would be interested in getting the member's feedback on it.

Has he heard from first-generation Canadians and people who have immigrated to Canada who are very frustrated with what the Liberals have done? As the member indicated, they have been basically undercutting the value of Canadian citizenship in our country.

Fred Davies: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a valuable point. There is nothing more valuable, in my view, than Canadian citizenship. All four of my grandparents immigrated here with nothing to show when they got here, but they worked hard. They built a family and a life, and they owned a home, which is very difficult for immigrants today.

We have to understand that being a Canadian is a special privilege. The process through which people proceed must be a legitimate process, not based on showing up here, being lost in the fabric of Canada and then suddenly being able to obtain citizenship. That is not an option for me, and I think we need to focus more on the suggested amendments to the legislation.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate to the members opposite, including government members and the NDP, that the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives do not oppose Bill C-3, quite the contrary. We have shown our support for the bill. However, we did propose amendments to provide a slightly tighter framework for determining whether or not someone is a Canadian citizen when they live outside Canada.

Can my colleague reassure the government that the committee did a thorough job? Should members not take that into account today in this next step in the House of Commons, which is the vote on the bill?

[*English*]

Fred Davies: Mr. Speaker, the discussions at committee were comprehensive. We spent a lot of time debating various issues with this legislation, and I am very happy that our colleagues in the Bloc and the Conservatives collaborated to understand some of the issues that were affecting this bill, which had gone through several

iterations in the previous Parliament. This legislation effectively died in the last Parliament. It died twice in the last Parliament through different iterations.

This version, with the the amendments that were put forward by the Conservatives and supported by the Bloc, as well as the amendments the Bloc presented that were supported by us, is a good piece of legislation. I would encourage the government to support it.

Taleb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak about Bill C-3 and the transformative power of Canadian citizenship. At the heart of it, the bill is about Canadians, families, their histories, their sacrifices and their deep and abiding connection to Canada, no matter where their careers or lives may take them.

Since second reading, the immigration committee has completed its review of the bill, heard from many witnesses and brought forward many amendments. As we approach its final passage, I want to highlight why the bill, as drafted, remains the right path forward.

Citizenship is about more than just legal status; it is about belonging to a diverse and welcoming community where shared democratic values bind us together. These values remind us of who we are. They remind us that Canada remains a beacon of light and hope in the world. They remind us that our strength as a nation lies not in uniformity but in our ability to celebrate difference by working together toward a common good, around shared values and shared aspirations.

My parents came to the country because they had little choice. They were lucky that Canada chose them. They came to the country under very difficult circumstances. They would bleed for the country. They would die for the country if that was required of them, because Canada has given them everything. Canada gave them the ability to practise their professions, practise their faith and raise their kids.

With an alignment with values and an alignment in the commitment to community, we take care of our neighbours and believe in the best in all of us. We work together despite our differences, and celebrate those differences, in an era when diversity is looked upon negatively. We look at those differences as an opportunity for strength and use that strength to communicate and connect with the rest of the world and trade with the rest of the world. We find that in our differences, there is remarkable strength and there are opportunities to learn from and about each other. Through that, we can learn about the complicated world in which we live.

My parents taught me from a very young age that citizenship does not just bring rights; it brings responsibilities. That is what we need to be talking about today. We need to talk about ensuring that there is a common understanding of what it means to be a Canadian citizen. It means a commitment to a set of principles and values and to ensuring that, even as migration and mobility are fixtures of modern life, the sense of connectedness to what Canada means is not lost.

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Many people who were born in the country, like me, sometimes forget the value of what it means to be a Canadian citizen. Ask anyone who has come to the country and fought for that citizenship, and whose families have fought for that citizenship, what it means.

Where a person is born or how they acquire their citizenship makes them no more or less of a citizen. We all share pride in being Canadian. Those of us who were born here are extremely lucky. It does not mean this value is diminished because of where we were born, whether we were born here or elsewhere.

The modern world takes us to different places. I have had the privilege of living in different countries and studying in different places. I have always come back to this country because it is my home. Others are not so lucky. They end up living in other countries for long periods of time, but their ties to the country and their love for the country do not change.

We have to stop placing a value judgment on what the litmus test is for someone's love and care for and their connectedness to the country by determining that, somehow, birth decides that. There are people born in the country who denigrate Canada every single day. They say the country is broken and they would rather we be part of the United States. There are people who are Canadian and live miles away from this country, and they take such tremendous pride in what this country means and what it stands for.

Our job is to ensure that people who have the right or should have the right to be Canadian citizens through the means articulated by our laws are afforded that opportunity and that those rights are not taken away. Canada already leads the world in so many different areas, particularly in showing the world how successful immigration can work. As some countries' access to immigration is tightened and as the rights to citizenship get tightened, Canada's approach is principled, embraces diversity and ensures the economic prosperity and global ties that make us stronger as a country.

• (1315)

We all know that Canadians live and work abroad, working in the arts and sciences, education, economic development, international development and diplomacy. These citizens maintain deep links to Canada, returning to raise their kids, to work, to study, to care for loved ones and to build community. Ensuring that their children, whether born or adopted abroad, can share in that identity is not just about fairness; it strengthens our country's cohesion and our global reach.

We all know from experiences in our own communities what new Canadians have told us about how important their citizenship is to them, what it means to them, how becoming a citizen has had an impact on them and the ways that we have to continue to safeguard the rights, responsibilities and shared values of citizenship. For those of us from all parties who have attended a citizenship ceremony, we know that it is a moment of deep pride for those who are taking that oath to this country. It is the pride in calling Canada home and the journey that they took to get here. It marks the culmination of years of sacrifice, hard work and perseverance. Often, sacrifices are made not just by the individual but by an entire family, many of whom will never see Canada. It is a moment of great connection to community, opportunity and, indeed, something greater than oneself.

Those of us who have seen the emotional weight of this moment will never forget it. Newcomers, often with their kids by their side, hold their certificates tightly, knowing what it means to them and to their family's future that they will have the security and confidence of being able to be called Canadian. This feeling of pride goes well beyond borders, with people around this world longing for the opportunity to call Canada home. For those fleeing conflict, persecution or hardship, Canadian citizenship represents a new beginning and a beacon of hope to all. It is a privilege that they do not take lightly. The gratitude expressed by new Canadians is profound. We all hear it in our streets and our communities. They speak with pride about the opportunities that Canada has given them when it comes to education and when it comes to building a peaceful life.

These pillars of Canadian society are the cornerstones of a better future, not just for new Canadians but for their children and for future generations. Whether it is through volunteering, participating in local cultural events or simply getting to know their neighbours, new Canadians are active participants in strengthening the fabric of our society. They embody the spirit of Canadian generosity, and they contribute to the success of their community in many ways. Their stories remind us of why the rules that govern citizenship by descent must be fair, must be clear and must be rooted in the lived experiences of Canadians everywhere.

It is up to us as a government to remain vigilant in ensuring that Canadian citizenship remains a powerful symbol of inclusivity, fairness and security. That is why we have brought forward the bill. It is to ensure that access to citizenship by descent remains fair and transparent. At a time when misinformation and division can threaten confidence in public institutions, Canada must show that its commitment to fairness extends well beyond borders.

It is a time when members opposite are saying that it is a good idea to consider a moratorium on immigration. That type of rhetoric does not help when trying to make important decisions for the future of this country. We are talking about extending access to citizenship beyond a first generation. What we are affirming is that Canadian identity is shaped not only by the place of birth but also by connection, contribution and shared values.

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The bill would remedy the status of people who would have been Canadian if not for the first-generation limit. It would also create a new forward-looking framework for citizenship by descent. Going forward, children who are born or adopted abroad beyond the first generation would be able to access Canadian citizenship if their Canadian parent can show a substantial connection to Canada. This is not a free-for-all. This is something that is going to be a real set of criteria. As long as a Canadian parent born or adopted abroad has accumulated three years of physical presence in Canada before the birth of the child, their child could be a citizen of this country.

• (1320)

Throughout the committee study, members explored different ways this model could apply. However, at the end of the day, what this is about is fairness. It is about fairness for Canadians. It is about fairness for those who were adopted by Canadians, and it is about fairness for communities who have put their roots down in this country.

We know that citizenship is a profound milestone for those who obtain it. It is a privilege that comes with opportunity and with gratitude, but it also comes with responsibility to uphold the values that unite us. Our job in this House should not be to divide Canadians. It should be to explain to people meaningfully what it means to be a Canadian, to ensure not only that those values are well inculcated but also that the rules of this place do not diminish the status, the stature and the value of one Canadian in relation to another.

• (1325)

Fred Davies (Niagara South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member opposite, but I am concerned.

The member's initial statement was that he supports the bill as drafted. Can I assume then that the government is going to vote against all the amendments that have been put forward by the Conservative opposition with the support of the Bloc?

Second, the member said that his parents were so proud of their citizenship when they came to Canada. My question is this: Would his parents believe in citizenship in perpetuity for people who actually had never set foot in Canada?

Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, as is the custom for members on this side, we consider every single amendment, we consider the impact of those amendments on the lives of Canadians and we make our voting decisions accordingly.

With respect to some of the amendments that were put forward, we heard the term “chain migration” being used. This is very dangerous language use in this place, because it fundamentally misrepresents. My colleague gave the example of a foreign service diplomat who could get tied up in the maelstrom of what the opposition is proposing.

What we are proposing is a reasoned, thoughtful and clear path to citizenship for people who meet the requirements.

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way stated that this side of the House supported a moratorium on immigration, which is patently misleading. What we have stated is that the non-partisan consensus on immigration has been broken by the government.

For 30-plus years, between 300,000 and 500,000 people came to Canada and valued this country, and that number bounced around because of economic circumstances and the situations around the world. That consensus was broken when the numbers skyrocketed past one million per year for three years. That was not fair to the immigrants coming in, and it is not fair to Canadians who then faced housing, medical and other shortages in this country. Would the member opposite not agree?

Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the member. I want to say two things. First, I think we all agree that there is an important moment in this country's history to be able to reform the immigration system so that it works in a thoughtful, meaningful way, which is exactly what our government has said we are doing, and that is exactly what we are doing.

The member opposite said that I made a blanket statement about a moratorium on all numbers, but that is not what I said. There are members opposite who have said that, including the member for Bowmanville—Oshawa North, who said that it was his personal view that there should be a moratorium on immigration. My understanding is that this runs counter to the very policies of the other side, so I would appreciate it if the member opposite would be able to clarify that position, but as far as I am concerned, those are the words of his colleague.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, members across the way keep saying that it is because of an anti-immigration attitude that people are critical or would have preferred that the amendments tabled in committee be adopted by the House. I find it really interesting that they are telling us this.

I am not an immigrant. If I go abroad and my children are born abroad, their children will not have Canadian citizenship if they do not spend at least three years here. Why are we victimizing immigrants? It is not immigration that is being targeted here, it is the issue of not granting citizenship to people who do not have sufficient ties to Canada and ensuring that the people who are granted citizenship are people who have demonstrated that attachment.

The issue that divides us is determining the level of attachment required, not whether or not to grant citizenship.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, the only reason we started talking about immigration and not just citizenship is that the members of the Conservative Party started talking about immigration and the problems related to the system.

It is hard for us to have a meaningful discussion about the concept of citizenship without acknowledging the problems with the immigration system in relation to obtaining citizenship. Even for Canadians, there need to be clear rules that everyone can understand about how to become a Canadian citizen.

That is why it is important for us to weigh this bill responsibly.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1330)

[English]

RELIEVING GRIEVING PARENTS OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN ACT (EVAN'S LAW)

Hon. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.) moved that Bill C-222, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code (death of a child), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-222, the relieving grieving parents of an administrative burden act, also known as Evan's law.

It is an incredible week for me, personally, to be introducing this legislation. Sunday represented the 10-year anniversary of my first being elected to this House, and I thank my friends and neighbours in Burnaby North—Seymour for continuing to give me their trust and support over all these years. Wednesday represented the 20th anniversary of my wife and I being together. I have to say, through you, Mr. Speaker, but mostly through the television cameras, to my wife Ravi that I love her very much. Of course, I love our two beautiful daughters, Nova and Solar, who are turning seven and five. That means I have been an MP for more than half of my relationship and a father for the majority of my time as an MP.

Why is this an important context for this bill? One of our daughters had a very challenging birth. We came incredibly close to losing her. Had it not been for the day-and-night, 24-hour service of a dedicated team of NICU nurses and doctors at the Royal Columbian Hospital over the first 20 days of her life, she would not have made it. Those 20 days in the NICU gave us a lot of perspective. There was not only a deep feeling of gratitude for everyone who works in our health care system, but an appreciation for the struggles parents of young children face every day. We met families who were both emotionally and financially devastated by the unplanned complications that so many new parents face.

Sadly, not every story has a happy ending. In Canada, approximately 1,600 families experience the unimaginable heartbreak of losing a child during the period in which they are receiving parental benefits. In those tragic circumstances, our system currently adds a layer of unnecessary pain and bureaucracy to families who are already facing profound loss.

Under the current rules, once a child passes away, the family technically no longer qualifies for parental benefits. This means that the family begins to accrue a financial liability that will later have to be clawed back. Families can choose to switch to EI sickness benefits, which provide similar compensation, but doing so requires them to contact Service Canada, not just for the initial application, but for every two weeks thereafter to confirm their eligibility. I think we can all agree that this is a cruel and unnecessary burden. Imagine forcing grieving parents to repeatedly explain their tragedy to strangers every 14 days. That is the unfortunate reality of our current system.

Private Members' Business

Evan's law offers a simple, elegant and compassionate solution. It states that if an individual qualifies for parental benefits and their child tragically passes away during that period, they would continue to qualify. There would be no phone call, no questions and no clawbacks, and there would be little to no additional cost. There would be no significant incremental increase in cost because parental benefits and the EI sickness benefit are nearly identical in value. Actually, this change would save government resources by reducing administrative complexity and eliminating needless red tape. Remember, every time a government official needlessly picks up the phone, it simultaneously increases costs to the taxpayer while decreasing the level of service provided to everyone else.

This is a small and technical amendment. The entire bill, fully translated, is less than one page, double-sided. While I have no delusions that this piece of legislation would change the world, I know it would make a world of difference to those 1,600 Canadian families who are directly impacted.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the many people and partners who helped make this bill possible. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Jobs and Families for their guidance and support as this proposal was developed. I want to recognize the previous members of HUMA who studied this issue in 2019 and whose work laid much of the foundation for this legislation, as well as the hon. member for Burlington, who was previously the minister responsible for Service Canada. She helped draft this legislation. She seconded it and will be speaking to it later today. Simply put, this bill would not exist without her. Also, Evan's parents live in her riding.

Evan's mother, Jennifer, was the individual who first raised this issue after enduring the loss of her child. The power of a free and democratic society is having the ability to turn a person's heartbreak into something that will help thousands of families in the future. I am thankful to Jennifer for her immeasurable contribution to this bill.

• (1335)

I also want to thank members from all parties who have reached out to me directly to express their support, share their personal stories and offer constructive ideas. Compassion does not belong to any one side of this House; it belongs to all of us. I truly believe the bill represents the kind of legislation we could all get behind, reflecting our shared values and shared humanity.

Private Members' Business

From my time working at Service Canada, I have seen first-hand how simple, innovative changes can make the government not only more service-oriented but also more effective and more efficient. At a time of global uncertainty, our government has expanded services to help make life more affordable and to make Canadian workers more productive. This includes such programs as child care, dental care, pharmacare and the national school food program. All of these programs help improve our quality of life in the short term while growing our economy and our competitiveness in the long term. However, they are only sustainable if we work to make our government as efficient as possible. Our Prime Minister has embodied this philosophy, challenging our government to spend less in operations so we can invest more in growing our economy and unlocking the full potential of Canada and Canadian families.

This piece of legislation aligns perfectly with this philosophy, which is important because we require a royal recommendation for the legislation to pass. I assure members that we are working diligently with the Prime Minister and the ministers responsible to get that recommendation. It is possible to modernize our government, make it more cost-effective and provide better services all at the same time when we work together. Evan's law encapsulates this principle perfectly. It is about creating a system that understands that families who are going through a hard time need compassion. It responds with effective simplicity. It is about designing government that works for people, not against them.

Bill C-222 is a small bill, but it would make a meaningful difference. It is a reminder that good government is about more than budgets and bureaucracy; it is about people and the compassion we show in the moments that matter most. This is a bill that makes sense, saves money and, most importantly, reflects the kind of Canada we want to build, one that is fair, efficient, smart and kind.

I hope all members of the House will join me in supporting Evan's law. If they have any questions or concerns, I invite anyone in this House or listening at home to reach out to me directly.

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for making that speech and for bringing the bill forward.

It is going to allow me to raise my son's name: Brenton. I spent 31 days in the NICU, 37 years ago. He did not make it.

Hon. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for that comment. It was difficult for him to stand up and make that comment.

I was very scared of getting through my section of the speech and had to slow down myself. That is how important the bill is.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am also deeply moved. I think there can be no greater tragedy than losing a child. I congratulate the member for introducing this bill, which brings all the current limitations of the Employment Insurance Act into full view.

I would like to know whether, as a member of the government, he has verified that this humane amendment to the act will receive a royal recommendation.

• (1340)

[*English*]

Hon. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I am working diligently to get it.

I can tell the member that the other thing I have been diligently working on as the previous minister responsible is making sure that, if we get that royal recommendation, it could be implemented under the legacy system of EI very quickly, as well as under the BDM programme as well. Everything is aligning in the right direction, but I am going to need everybody's help to make sure that it happens.

Hon. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to add my gratitude to the hon. member for Burnaby North—Seymour for bringing the bill forward.

In his speech he said that he knew this was not going to change the world, but that it would make a world of difference for the affected families. I could not agree more. For those 1,600 families who tragically experience this every year, he is making their lives a bit easier. I just want to thank him for that.

I am also a former minister of Service Canada, and my colleague is as well; we do not often get two previous ministers of Service Canada sitting beside each other. I wonder if he can talk about what this means from a service delivery point of view, why this is not only good policy that is compassionate and does the right thing but also better at delivering services.

Hon. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the member for Burlington, for raising the issue initially. I had never been a part of the private members' bill lottery system before, and when I was lucky enough to get the number five spot, I felt the weight of that responsibility because it was an opportunity to do something that affected people in a meaningful way. Different people use the opportunity differently.

When the member came to me and presented this idea, I thought about it for literally an entire day. I think it made sense to both of us really quickly, as previous ministers responsible for Service Canada. The fact is that there is so much good that we can do just by looking inside our current organization and asking the questions of why are we delivering something in a particular way and, given the technology and the state of our country, whether there is a way to improve upon it.

Yes, this would be a small change but a meaningful one and part of a collection of changes that, if we all work together, can make our government more efficient and more compassionate, and can certainly provide better services to Canadians, especially when they are facing the most tragic of circumstances.

Private Members' Business

Jamil Jivani (Bowmanville—Oshawa North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today as a survivor of stage 4 cancer, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in particular. I bring that up because it greatly shapes my perspective on the legislation we are discussing today.

When I was sick and going through chemotherapy and radiation treatment, it was taxing on me as a person emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually, but the hardest part of it was seeing my mother endure it all. My mom is a strong woman and a woman of faith, but for any parent, seeing a child go through a serious illness hits very hard.

I remember vividly the fear and anxiety in my mother's eyes. I remember her face when I was going in for a lumbar puncture, PET scan or blood work, and saw the impact that me being in that position had on her. It was one of the haunting moments of the whole ordeal for me. What my family went through in those years was just a fraction of the pain and anguish that a family goes through when they lose a child. What my family went through was just a fraction of the pain and anguish that parents go through when they lose a young child in particular.

I am very happy to stand here today to express my complete support for Bill C-222, Evan's law. I think the government needs to do as much as it possibly can to support families, in particular to support grieving families, through difficult times. This legislation represents an important move in that direction.

I want to acknowledge the hard work that was done to get this legislation here. I will start by acknowledging the member of Parliament for Airdrie—Cochrane, who has been an advocate on this issue for years. I also want to acknowledge the member of Parliament for Burnaby North—Seymour for bringing this bill to the House. I understand that he worked closely with the member for Burlington on it. I salute them and everybody else who has gotten this legislation to this point.

To me, this is about the government fulfilling the promises it makes to families. If the government promises to provide parental leave benefits to a family, it should do so regardless of the circumstances changing, especially tragic circumstances, which I think most people would regard as deserving more support, not less.

I hope the Liberal government hears my heart on this. I say this with zero criticism or opposition to the bill. I would like to propose a change to it that would expand the protection of parental leave benefits to more grieving families. Bill C-222 is specific to families grieving the loss of a child, and that is an incredibly important part of the changes to the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code. However, there are also families grieving in very similar situations but where a parent has passed away, and as a result, they are dealing with many of the same challenges that the current version of Bill C-222 seeks to remedy. Since we are having a conversation about making changes to the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code, I think it opens a window for us to extend consideration, generosity and empathy to grieving families in other situations as well.

I raise this on behalf of some of my constituents in Bowmanville—Oshawa North, many of whom signed a petition on this

very issue recently, a petition that was inspired by the difficult circumstances of a family that I represent. For the sake of their privacy, I will not say their names, but they brought their situation to my attention, and I believe that with an appropriate amendment, this bill could remedy the circumstances they have found themselves in.

I want to share what those circumstances are. They were brought to my attention by the surviving husband of a woman who tragically passed away while on parental leave with their first daughter.

● (1345)

The surviving husband contacted Service Canada to inform it of his wife's passing away. The remaining months of parental leave benefits were then promptly cut off for his family. Shortly after, the surviving husband received a bill from the CRA requiring him to repay the benefits he had received between the time of his wife's passing and the date when Service Canada was notified.

I do not believe anyone in the House wants families facing unimaginable loss to go through that. I do not believe anyone in the House wants the CRA to be sending a bill to a grieving husband or wife. I do not believe anyone in the House wants Service Canada to be cutting off benefits promised to a family at a time when they are not only facing an unimaginable loss, but also dealing with the economic uncertainty and instability that comes with a parent passing away. My hope is that, in hearing this story, we might be able to work together on expanding this very empathetic and important piece of legislation to include families in these circumstances.

At the request of my constituent, I would like to read a statement from him to help people get a better sense of how all of this impacted him and his family. He wrote to me and said, "My daughter lost her mom before her first birthday and that is a heavy weight for us to carry as a family for a lifetime. Maintaining benefit payments and extending some grace to those who find themselves in such an unfortunate position might make all the difference in the world to somehow who is already running on empty mentally, emotionally, physically and financially."

The spirit of Evan's law would be to protect and relieve grieving parents from an additional burden, and I think it would be appropriate to provide the same consideration in cases of death of a parent who is receiving parental leave benefits. Continuing these payments to the surviving spouse for the remainder of the approved benefit period would alleviate a significant burden on the small percentage of families who face these particular tragic circumstances.

As I stand here in full support of Bill C-222, and I certainly look forward to enthusiastically voting in favour of it in this chamber, it is my belief that, by raising these important concerns about the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code, we have an opportunity to extend this consideration to more grieving families.

Private Members' Business

I want to reiterate that I hope the Liberal government hears my heart on this. I say none of this as a criticism, and in fact, I look forward to the possibility of collaborating with the government on an amendment that would expand this consideration to more people. I am happy to have shared the story of some of my constituents who have been impacted by the policy status quo.

I really do believe the core of this is asking governments to live up to the promises they make to families. I think we have to see that, when the government promises EI payments, or when the government promises parental leave benefits to a family, that promise should be seen through, from the beginning to the end, for the appropriate period of time. That money should never be clawed back. There should be no expectation that grieving families have to return money paid out in that period of time and, most importantly, that families know they can count on that money they have planned for, especially in a tragic situation where there has been a loss.

I do hope we can give this amendment the consideration it deserves. I look forward to Bill C-222 supporting grieving families across our country.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague for introducing Bill C-222. As we have seen in the few minutes that we have been discussing it, this bill should be something we can all agree on. Ideology and partisanship often prevail in Parliament, but in this case, we are talking about what we hold most dear, our loved ones, our children, those we have lost. That brings a whole new perspective to the debate. I am not even sure that we can call this a debate. I would therefore like to thank and recognize my colleague.

My thoughts also go out to Evan's family. This bill, which I hope will become law, bears his name. Like several members have pointed out, seeing newborns come into our lives and sometimes also having to say goodbye to them is something very human that we all share.

This is something extremely human and there is no way to avoid the human experience. I am a mother myself. As a mother and with all the empathy that we have as human beings, when we put ourselves in the shoes of these families who have to say goodbye to a newborn child, we understand the pain and suffering they experience.

I, too, have had difficult experiences. I have several children, but I have a little boy who suffered a perinatal stroke at birth. No one will ever know why these things happen. Moments like that are filled with fear. Life is fragile; it is fragile in the moment, and it remains fragile afterwards.

As my colleague so eloquently described, it is in these moments that we experience true sorrow. These may be the moments in our lives when we are the most fragile. This is when we should fight with all our strength, but it is also when we have the least strength, because we are busy trying to survive. I believe this is what bereaved families and parents are going through: They are simply trying to survive.

As my colleague said, there are anomalies, even absurdities, that would be so easy to correct. Examples include the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code. Take, for example, the requirement to call in every two weeks to report on one's status. Families do not need that kind of burden.

I believe that, as legislators, it is also our duty to make laws more humane. There are often grey areas, things that we did not think of when passing legislation. Lived experience often leads us to realize that we need to improve things and take these grey areas into account, and perhaps shed some light on certain things.

That is what we are doing today. We think this situation is absurd. We have the empathy necessary to understand the need to change the law and the Canada Labour Code. I also believe that we have the means to do so.

I do not know if that argument should be made today. Personally, I think we are well beyond purely monetary considerations. Canada is a rich country. I understand that things are really tough right now, but the difficulties are cyclical and contextual. However, irrespective of that, there are still things we can do. Workers and employers pay premiums, of course, and that is what funds EI. That fund needs to be able to support families.

I wholeheartedly agree with this bill. I would say that, in Quebec, we have this protection under the Quebec parental insurance plan. Quebec has its own plan when a baby is born. People who are in mourning already benefit from this protection, from this assurance that they will be able to navigate this difficult time with dignity, respect, understanding and kindness, without having to worry about the economic and administrative side of things.

• (1355)

I repeat that I completely support this bill. I hope that all members of the House will be able to come to an agreement rather quickly. I do not believe that we can even call this a debate here in the House of Commons. We all want to take care of these people and we have the means to do so.

I hope my colleague will improve the employment insurance regime to make it more humane. My colleague may talk later about the bill introduced by the Bloc Québécois entitled the *Émilie Sans-*façon** act. When someone is unable to fight because they are fighting for their life, they need support. I think that it is a good social agreement to say that we will use the means that we have to take care of our own when they need it the most.

I would like to once again thank my colleague for his initiative. My thoughts also go out to all those in the House or outside of Parliament who have experienced a tragedy like this and who need support. I want them to know that the Bloc Québécois is with them.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Hon. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to take a moment to thank colleagues in this House for their incredibly thoughtful and compassionate interventions. This is a moment when Canadians can be quite proud of this chamber as we come together for our shared humanity. I really want to thank my colleague from Burnaby North—Seymour for bringing the bill forward, because it touches all of us.

I rise today to tell everyone about Jennifer and her son Evan. Jennifer is the reason I stand here today in support of the bill, and her story is the inspiration for Evan's law. In spring 2022, a constituent called me to tell me her story. She had found her baby blue and motionless in his crib. In a panic, she called 911, and emergency services arrived soon after, confirming that he had passed. As she and her husband waited nearly six hours before a coroner came, a million questions flooded their minds. The experience was traumatizing.

Evan was four months old when he passed away. Jennifer described him as “a laughy little guy” who had the best smile. He loved to be held, and everybody loved to hold him. He was, as she said lovingly, the perfect little baby boy.

In the days that followed, Jennifer and her husband felt as though they did not know what to do with themselves, as though they were walking into walls, disoriented, exhausted and devastated. As a mother of two, I cannot begin to imagine the heartbreak and despair that comes with losing a child. I hope I never have to, but, sadly, as we all know, this happens to thousands of families each year in Canada. For about 1,600 families, it happens while they are on EI parental leave. Jennifer was one of those Canadians on EI parental leave at the time. No one told her after she lost Evan that she needed to contact Service Canada, but she did so of her own accord, which is not the case for many parents in her situation. She figured she needed to find out what this would mean.

Jennifer soon contacted Service Canada to describe what had happened. She was informed that because her child had passed, she was no longer eligible to receive parental benefits. In the eyes of the Employment Insurance Act as it is currently written, once a child passes away, the act no longer considers a person a parent. Therefore, they are no longer entitled to receive parental benefits. When I learned this, I was shocked. In my humble opinion, it is cruel and unnecessary both to define what being a parent is in this way and to cease benefits immediately if a person loses a child while on leave.

To receive any financial support or time off work, Jennifer would have to switch to EI sickness benefits, a program that is not designed with grieving parents in mind. She spent hours on the phone trying to switch her benefits. Then she was told that she would have to call back every two weeks to confirm her eligibility. This took a serious toll on her. She told me the biggest thing was that every single time she called, she spoke to a new person. She was forced to relive her trauma every two weeks and explain everything over again, every single time. Through no fault of their own, the staff picking up the phone at Service Canada were not always equipped or trained to handle the sensitivity and weight of that kind of call.

As we can imagine, contacting Service Canada is the last thing on the minds of grieving parents. Often, parents may not even realize that they have become ineligible. In too many cases, parental benefits continue to be paid in full, only for the CRA to seek repayment months or even years later. In effect, these parents find themselves indebted to the government because of the death of their child. I strongly believe this runs contrary to Canadian values and the values of this House, as we have seen today.

Like Jennifer and her husband, roughly 1,600 Canadian families face the tragedy of infant loss each year. Almost 50% of those losses occur in the first 24 hours following birth. For most who experience it, it is the darkest moment of their lives. Despite this, the current provisions of the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code cut off access to parental benefits when infant loss occurs, removing critical support that these grieving Canadians so desperately need. When families need the most support, additional bureaucratic and financial strain is imposed upon them. However, we can change that, and Evan's law would do so.

• (1400)

While no policy can take away the sorrow and tragedy of losing a child, it is our duty as legislators to ensure that the systems we have in place do not add unnecessary burdens to the grieving process. The essence of the bill lies in our ability to support parents during their darkest moments. For anyone who has experienced a loss, particularly the loss of a child, the pain is not just emotional; it can also be financial and logistical, and it is often overwhelming.

By removing the need for a new claim and by ensuring that the parent continues to be eligible for benefits, Evan's law would provide not only financial relief but emotional relief as well. Grieving parents would no longer be forced to prove their eligibility in the midst of their mourning. The bill would send a message that as a country, we understand the profound impact of such a loss and that we are here to support those who face it with the utmost dignity and respect.

We must also recognize that every parent grieves differently. Jennifer needed time off. She needed time to grieve. On the other hand, her husband needed to go right back to work; that is what helped him through the grieving process. The bill would give parents the permission and the flexibility to grieve how they need to in one of the worst moments of their lives. We can give them the choice: to return to work when they are ready or to take the time they need.

Private Members' Business

Just last week, I heard from two more parents, Samantha and Neil. After they had suffered through three first-trimester losses on their journey to parenthood, their daughter Lily finally arrived, safe and sound, last December. However, this past March, just days before Lily turned three months old, the family received devastating news: Lily had been diagnosed with a highly aggressive form of acute leukemia. Samantha said, "We felt like lightning had hit us for the fourth time."

Lily began undergoing intensive treatment immediately, and her parents moved into the hospital with her. They did not know how short their time left with her would be. Due to complications with her treatment, Lily passed away on June 28. Samantha soon learned that she was no longer eligible for parental benefits. In the midst of grieving such an enormous loss, she was forced to navigate a series of burdensome administrative tasks.

Samantha told me, "had Evan's law been in place, this would have been one less thing I would have worried about. It would have provided us some relief during that unimaginable time, allowing us some peace so we could grieve the death of our daughter."

When we speak about family, we often focus on the joy that comes with raising children and supporting parents through the milestones of life, but it is equally vital to acknowledge the pain of loss and to ensure that our social safety net does not fail people who are in their time of greatest need.

Let me conclude with some thanks. First, I thank Jennifer for having the courage to share her and Evan's story, not just with me but with all of Canada. I thank Nora Spinks, Michelle La Fontaine and Lynn Steele, and the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network, for their collaboration and support as we developed the legislation.

Of course, I offer very deep and heartfelt gratitude to my colleague and my dear friend, the member for Burnaby North—Seymour, for taking up the task and introducing Evan's law. I and thousands of others across the country are grateful for his compassion and leadership in moving Evan's law forward.

In their darkest moment, Evan's law would give grieving parents the knowledge that their benefits would not end abruptly, and the opportunity to take care of themselves. We are a nation that prides itself on compassion, and Evan's law would be a step toward ensuring that our policies reflect that compassion in the most challenging of circumstances.

In honour of Evan's life and in honour of every parent who has experienced this unimaginable loss, I am grateful to my colleagues who have expressed their support for this private member's bill. It is time to give grieving parents the space and the support they need during the most difficult time in their lives.

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply moved and feel privileged to speak on the bill introduced by my colleague from Burnaby North—Seymour.

I know exactly how my colleague must feel in introducing a bill that responds to a very obvious need expressed by the people

around him, people who have experienced the tragedy of losing a child and having to return to work quickly without being able to grieve because EI is not adapted to this type of situation.

I know how he feels because when members have to enter a lottery to introduce a private member's bill. If they win, they get the privilege and opportunity to debate one of their bills. I had that privilege in 2021. I introduced Bill C-265, which sought to increase the number of weeks of special EI sickness benefits from 15 to 50. I know how he feels because we had to convince our colleagues here that the EI program could afford it, that the fund has enough money from workers and employers to be able to offer that number of weeks to those who are battling cancer, for example.

I also had the names of people with colorectal cancer, for example. It has been scientifically documented that getting through this form of cancer takes at least 37 weeks of special EI sickness benefits. Although treatments are increasingly effective, they take a longer period of time and can take a heavy toll on a person's health. I could name people who had to go back to work or borrow money, in short, people who had to go into debt and subject themselves to financial stress, because they did not have enough weeks of special EI sickness benefits to live comfortably and, most importantly, to be able to focus their energy on fighting their disease.

When someone is grieving the loss of a child or suffering from a serious illness, they should not have to spend time worrying about their survival or about how they are going to pay the rent. They need to muster their fighting spirit. People who lose a child in tragic circumstances need that energy to grieve and overcome their ordeal. I know of nothing worse in life than losing a child, either at birth or in the course of the child's life. In my opinion, there is no right age to lose a child.

I understand how my colleague feels. Bill C-265 passed through all stages of the legislative process. We defended it successfully in committee, and it received virtually unanimous support from all parties in the House. However, when all the cancer patients were waiting for the news, in the end, the Liberal government in power, this same Liberal government, refused to give it a royal recommendation. People who had aggressive forms of cancer and needed their energy to fight the disease unfortunately were left with the bad news. Benefits went from 15 weeks to 26 weeks, even though we knew full well that many serious illnesses take longer than 26 weeks to recover from.

Private Members' Business

I understand my colleague and I want to reassure him. The Bloc Québécois will support this bill, and our party will work hard to convince all our colleagues that it must be passed, because it is a humane response to a terrible tragedy. Most importantly, the EI fund can afford it. We are not talking about the general population or a large number of people. There is no financial reason to oppose this bill. We are not talking about a large number of deaths that could bankrupt the fund.

• (1410)

I hope that, this time, the Liberals, the Conservatives, the NDP and the Bloc will agree to amend the Employment Insurance Act and allow these parents, who are facing a human tragedy, to focus on their grief without being forced to return to work too quickly before their wounds have begun to heal. We do not ever completely get over the death of a child. A part of us is always broken. It will always affect us. However, having a much-needed break before returning to work is important.

This brings me to the point that the Employment Insurance Act is outdated. It is not a modern piece of legislation. The Bloc Québécois has been saying for a while now that it needs to be modernized and adapted to the new labour market and new realities. For 10 years now, the government has been promising us an overhaul of the Employment Insurance Act that will take into account certain provisions whose inclusion in the act is no longer relevant.

I will share my perspective as a woman and as a mother. I am sure that members of the House are aware of what I am about to say. A person who has a child, goes on maternity leave and loses her job at the end of her maternity leave is not entitled to EI benefits because she has not accumulated the necessary hours of work to qualify for EI. This is deeply unfair. It is shocking discrimination against women.

I want to say that there are members across the way who have an opportunity to convince their government to modernize the act, or at least to remove certain sections that discriminate against women who experience motherhood and lose their jobs after maternity leave.

The act is also discriminatory with regard to seasonal employment in general. I do not like the term “seasonal workers”. It is not the workers who are seasonal; it is the jobs that are seasonal. In this case too, there is discrimination against those who work in certain regions of Quebec and who depend on seasonal employment for their livelihood.

The Employment Insurance Act needs to be overhauled and modernized. In the meantime, the Bloc Québécois offers its full and unwavering support, as well as its influence in the House of Commons, to enable the passage of the bill before us, Bill C-222.

• (1415)

[*English*]

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to bring the voices of Chatham-Kent—Leamington to this chamber. I am pleased to add my support to Bill C-222.

I want to add some context. This issue has been around the chamber for some time, and I want to add my acknowledgement to the work put into this by my former colleague, the member for Banff—Airdrie, who put forward Motion No. 110 in a previous Parliament. Certainly, through previous governments, we have been pushing for this from this side of the table. I want to acknowledge that that effort is paying off, and today we are finding compassionate support around the chamber to address the needs of those at some of their hardest points in life.

I am going to end up speaking personally, so I will try to get there, but before I go there, Mr. Speaker, you may rule me out of order with this next statement. I know that I cannot refer to any other member by their last name, but I am unsure whether I can refer to myself.

My last name, as members all know, is Epp. I am not the first Epp who has graced this chamber floor. There have been others. In fact, going across Canada, there are at least seven different Epp families that are unrelated to each other. The former minister of health under the Mulroney government, Jake Epp, was no relation to me or my wife. Why is that important? My wife's maiden name was Epp. Before any member in the chamber jumps to any conclusions, I want to state that all six fingers on both hands of all four of our daughters are beautiful.

Why is that important? My wife was born in New Westminster, British Columbia, and was adopted. An adopted identical twin, she grew up in Calgary, went to elementary school in Calgary, went to high school in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, and then went to university in Winnipeg, where we met. She says that she must retire in Quebec, la belle province, and retire or die in Newfoundland as she works her way across this beautiful country.

We met, married and, in 1988, we were anticipating our first child. We knew from early on in that pregnancy that there would be issues, so we began the process of driving up what I now affectionately call the “bore-01”, up and down highway 401, which I have travelled innumerable times in my various capacities over my professional career. Then, it was as a young to-be father, as my wife spent a lot of time in St. Joseph's, the London hospital, preparing for the birth of a challenged child. We anticipated that he would be born with insufficiently developed lungs. That was the diagnosis because the scans had revealed intestines in his chest.

When he was born, with two surgical teams waiting, the first thing he did was scream, which was not anticipated. That gave us hope. He screamed; he lived. I had been preparing myself, throughout the last two-thirds of my wife's pregnancy, to lose him.

The member for Burlington spoke of how people grieve differently. I did a lot of my grieving prior to my son Brenton's birth to be there depending on the outcome.

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In the 37 years that have followed, my wife and I continue to grieve differently. I went back to work. We were in the middle of tomato season. He was born in 9230 season, that is a Heinz variety that we were harvesting on August 13, 1988, and he died in 6203 season, September 13. He lived 31 days. As members can hear in my voice, I have lived experience with what this bill attempts to address.

• (1420)

My son underwent an emergency colostomy at two days old, which he survived. He then began to turn blue and actually went through open heart surgery at two weeks old, when doctors grafted his left subclavian vein. For those of us from the medical community, they grafted the vein around his aorta where the blockage was, and he survived. I am still grateful to the many friends who drove me up the “bore-01” to see my wife and child every evening, as I harvested during the daytime and saw them at night.

There was only one night that I did not make that trip. We were advised that we could take him home in two days' time, so I stayed at home and slept until 2 a.m., when I received that call to “come now”. It was obviously a difficult night because we lost him that night.

I said my wife is a twin. Her twin was flying from Alberta, and we picked her up at the airport that morning. She was coming for a dedication; she came for a funeral. We prepared for that, and still to this day, I am immensely thankful for the friends and family who supported us.

How does this relate to government bureaucratic processes and compassion? The morning of his funeral, we received a call from a government agency that said we had made a mistake in his birth certificate application. We did not know how to fill out the baby's mother's maiden name. We filled it out as “Epp” and “Epp”, of course, and obviously we had made a mistake. There are many Epps in Canada, as there are many Smiths, McDonalds, etc., from many heritage streams, but that was the call we received.

We worked our way through it that morning. The morning of my son's funeral, we were working through a government process. I do not fault or cast aspersions on the bureaucracy that made those calls. They were following through with their due diligence. However, if there are ways we can streamline our government processes to show compassion and show respect for taxpayer dollars, which is everything that this bill would do, why do we not do that?

I am very heartened by the support around this chamber. It has taken a while, but I am glad the government and all opposition parties are bringing their compassion to this chamber and addressing the opportunity to make life better for Canadians in their most heartfelt and difficult times. I have lived those times, so I want to say thanks.

We subsequently had four daughters. I mentioned them. They are beautiful. They do only have five fingers on each hand. My wife is adopted, but because of her last name, we went through some processes before we had them, given the experience we had with our son Brenton.

Sometimes people ask me about them. I am the father of four daughters, as members can see by the colour of my hair. I am immensely proud, as my wife Charlene is, of their accomplishments.

I have shared this experience with many other families that have asked me how many children I have, and whether I answer with four or five depends on how much time I have in the conversation. Today is my opportunity to acknowledge my son, because the circumstances of the day have afforded me the time to bring his name to this chamber. It is an august responsibility that we have as members to speak. It is a privilege.

I have had the chance to introduce my two granddaughters to this chamber. How many people in Canada get to do that? I want to give a shout-out to the House of Commons orientation staff who oriented me six years ago. They impressed upon those of us going through that process the unique opportunity we have as members to represent Canadians.

• (1425)

Boys and girls today dream of potentially becoming NHL and, maybe now, baseball players. A truly Canadian dream is to become an NHL player or PWHL player.

As we walk the tunnel between the welcome centre and the temporary home of the House of Commons, we see the plaques from the first Parliament to the 43rd. I have served in the 44th and we are now in the 45th Parliament. We see the names of all parliamentarians who have had the chance to serve. There are fewer of us who have had the chance to speak in the chamber than there are people who have played professional hockey in our country's history.

That is how special the opportunity is that we have as parliamentarians to represent our fellow citizens. Let us cherish that. When there are moments when we can come together, when we can join our voices to make life better for Canadians, let us be thankful for that opportunity.

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have always considered the hon. colleague opposite to be an excellent parliamentarian, but I now put him in the category of an outstanding human being. The courage that he has shown today on the floor of the House of Commons, to share such a personal story and to relate it to a bill is indescribable. I do not think I have seen it in all my years, 10 years now, of serving as a member of Parliament. I truly commend him for that.

We have an opportunity. We have seen it today, with the spirit in the House. This is politics, and politics is naturally partisan. That is not always a terrible thing, but sometimes it prevents us from doing the work we need to do as parliamentarians to benefit the country. I would point to the bill, a private member's bill that our colleague has put forward, a private member's bill that seems to have unanimous consent, to say the least, to go forward.

This needs to go forward. I hope a royal recommendation is given, because no less than 1,600 families a year are affected by the loss of a child. The sponsor of the bill, in his initial speech on the subject, made clear that there is an elegant solution here, as he put it.

This would not require extra spending or anything like that. EI parental benefits and EI sickness benefits are almost equal. Removing the bureaucracy from the process and ensuring that we have a compassionate approach put forward is absolutely vital. It is something that we can unite on here today.

It would make clear that we also respect the House of Commons' process. In 2019, the committee that is responsible for labour matters and benefits, the HUMA committee, spoke about the need to go in this direction. If we respect Parliament, as we do, and if we

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respect the House and its procedures, as we do, we will give life to and go forward with this particular change.

I thank everyone who has spoken today. It is a day I will not forget.

● (1430)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

It being 2:30 p.m., the motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

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