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Thursday, March 26, 2026

Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 26, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)
[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour of tabling, in both official languages, the government's responses to eight petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

STRONG AND FREE ELECTIONS ACT

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and to enact An Act to change the names of certain electoral districts, 2026.

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

* * *

AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE CERTAIN PAYMENTS TO BE MADE OUT OF THE CONSOLIDATED REVENUE FUND

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-26, An Act to authorize certain payments to be made out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the purpose of improving housing supply.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

LIAISON

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure and the honour to present today, in both official languages, the first report of the Liaison Committee, entitled "Committee Activities and Expenditures April 1, 2025-December 31, 2025".

CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC) moved for leave to introduce C-272, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (supervised drug consumption sites).

He said: Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing legislation to ban supervised drug consumption sites next to children. Fentanyl, meth, crack cocaine and heroin are the drugs being smoked, injected and snorted both inside and outside of supervised consumption sites across Canada. Every supervised drug consumption site operates only because the federal Minister of Health approves it through an exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. She has the power to act, but chooses not to.

Because of that failure, used needles and crack pipes are being found on playgrounds. Children are walking past clouds of fentanyl smoke on their way to school and day cares are shutting down because children are no longer safe at these sites.

A decade of drug enablement policies has failed Canadians suffering with addiction and the communities surrounding these sites. Canadians understand that supervised consumption sites are magnets for drugs and disorder, two things that have no place next to children.

New peer-reviewed evidence now confirms that closing these sites actually leads more users toward life-saving addiction treatment, which is another reason to take action.

As a father and a grandfather, I hope all members will quickly pass this bill to protect children.

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

* * *

● (1005)

FAIRNESS FOR ALL CANADIAN TAXPAYERS ACT

Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC) moved that Bill S-217, An Act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act (reporting on unpaid income tax), be read the first time.

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He said: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to sponsor this bill in this chamber. I would like to congratulate Senator Downe on his third time sending this bill, which deals with increased transparency at the CRA, into this chamber.

The names of those who are convicted of tax evasion, both in Canada and abroad, should be made easily and publicly available for all in Canada to see. In addition, this bill would require the CRA to publish statistics related to the tax gap, which is the amount the CRA assesses versus what it actually collects. It also includes provisions to make data more easily available to the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

I look forward to working with all members in the House to shepherd this bill through this chamber. As I mentioned before, this is the third time it has come to this chamber for consideration.

I would like to thank the seconder in this chamber, the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, who is a wonderful colleague and partner in this quest to introduce more transparency at the CRA.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I move that the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, presented on Monday, March 23, be concurred in.

First, I want to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska, whose co-operation on this issue has been invaluable.

The motion we are debating is as follows:

That the committee report to the House to request that the government establish a public and independent inquiry into cost overruns on IT contracts, including the Phoenix pay system, ArriveCAN and Benefits Delivery Modernization programme.

First, I want to reiterate my support for the many seniors in need who do not have access to their benefits because of the problems with the Cúram software.

I will begin my speech by saying something that I think all my colleagues in the House will agree with. The Bloc Québécois knows that that the outdated computer systems had to be replaced. No one is denying that. We agree with modernizing our IT systems.

The government keeps claiming that we want to hang onto the old systems that date back to the early 1960s, but that is false. We are in favour of modernizing our IT systems. What we are speaking out against today is the skyrocketing costs associated with IT contracts and the government's lack of expertise in this area. That is why we are calling for an independent public inquiry on the management of IT contracts, and the Quebec National Assembly has also adopted a unanimous motion to that effect.

The Prime Minister made the same type of claim when answering a question that I asked him in the House. He said that the Bloc Québécois had not attended a technical briefing, when that briefing

was actually scheduled for the next day. The Bloc Québécois did its homework. We take our work seriously. For me, the answers that senior officials gave to the media at a technical briefing last week clearly demonstrate the importance of calling an independent public inquiry. We need to put politics aside and have a judge examine this issue.

First, let me reiterate one critical point: The estimates were not reliable, and the department knew that. The official quoted in *La Presse* stated that there were no precise estimates and that the government knew the costs were going to balloon. They went on to say that cost overruns often happen with big IT projects. This means that some officials gave the department estimates they knew to be inaccurate. Ministers knew that, but they decided to move forward anyway.

This is extremely troubling for me. It means that Canada's public service does not have the necessary expertise to evaluate IT contracts. It cannot say whether IT consultants are telling them the truth or not, which means that expertise is now in the hands of the private sector, and the private sector has no compunction about putting both hands in the cookie jar. Officials also said they were surprised to learn that it would cost money to dismantle the system that they have to replace. Why was this analysis not done before an estimate was submitted? Analyzing the cost of a transformation is a no-brainer.

The Prime Minister and the departments justified the ballooning costs by saying that the benefits delivery modernization program was only delayed for old age security. However, briefing notes, question period notes and ministerial transition books consistently mention a figure of \$2.3 billion to complete the benefit delivery modernization program. At no point does any document say otherwise.

The proof is that a note dated September 20, 2023, prepared for the member for Burnaby North—Seymour, the then minister of citizens' services, clearly states: "The December 2020 Budget of \$2.2B included estimated costs for OAS, EI and CPP on the Benefits Delivery Modernization (BDM) Programme".

The government knew that the estimated budget was \$2.2 billion in December 2020. It never questioned whether this amount would cover every phase of the benefits delivery modernization program. Even the Clerk of the Privy Council mentioned this to then-prime minister Justin Trudeau in a memo dated May 27, 2022. She wrote that there were concerns about Employment and Social Development Canada's ability to deliver the program on time and on budget, and that was before the Auditor General's report on the project was tabled in 2023.

Routine Proceedings

When journalists questioned officials last week as to why there were nearly \$5 billion in cost overruns, they did not receive an answer. What is even more concerning is that no one knows the system's operating costs. In fact, the civil servant who provided the technical briefing was quoted in *La Presse* as saying, "As for future costs, five or six years from now when the program is completed, I don't have any specific figures." He confirmed that there would be recurring costs to run the program.

• (1010)

According to experts consulted by *La Presse*, these costs, which include software licences, training, hosting and adjustments, should account for between 10% and 15% of the initial development costs. They will be at least \$600 million per year for this program, which is insane. Why are these costs not known? Why is this not part of the contract analysis? Why is the person in charge of this program unable to answer questions about that? This clearly shows that the government does not have the expertise needed to evaluate these IT contracts. There is also the \$3.5 billion that will go to private firms. Right now, nearly \$1 billion has already been allocated to the program.

The Cúram program was previously deployed in Ontario and led to huge problems. Who knew about the issues with Cúram? The member for Markham—Stouffville was well aware of what Ontario went through. She is well aware of the report from the Auditor General of Ontario. She was an Ontario MPP at the time. The findings are damning: IBM missed data conversion deadlines, and the data contained errors. IBM did not provide adequate expertise. The Ontario ministry relied on the IBM project manager to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the Cúram consultants. In short, these findings raise questions about the data.

When the government uses consultants from private firms, it risks becoming dependent on them. The government is dependent on them. I should add that government programs always require adjustments and customization. We saw these kinds of problems with the Phoenix pay system: IBM was surprised that it had to provide a French version of the software, since the government is required to be bilingual because there are two official languages. The same thing happened with Cúram. According to the officials' report, the translations were not done properly.

We know that Canada has more than just one jurisdiction. This may be news to Deloitte and company, but in Quebec, we speak French. In Quebec, we also have our own tax return. We have the Public Curator and we have benefits from the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail, or CNESST. Quebec's unique characteristics must be taken into account, and we seriously doubt that this was done in the configuration of Cúram.

The public servants' report clearly states that the French-language interfaces displayed instructions in English, and their solution was to use Google Translate. A Radio-Canada article from June 2025 reported that, after encountering an error involving a missing form, a francophone public servant was presented with an error message so badly translated that it was unintelligible. The government unequivocally states that developing a solution in-house would have been too risky, but public servants and the gov-

ernment are in the best position to identify organizations and needs, especially for systems like these. They need internal expertise to develop them. We are moving toward a world where technologies play a key role in management, but this government constantly wants to outsource that to private companies.

In her memo to the Prime Minister in May 2022, the Clerk of the Privy Council, Janice Charette, wrote that institutional knowledge about custom system design, function and interdependencies have not been captured and communicated over time, meaning the Government of Canada is critically low in the expertise needed for legacy IT maintenance and replacement. That is why we want an independent public inquiry.

This past Monday, in a report on modernizing the pay system, the Auditor General of Canada noted that Phoenix 2.0, known as Dayforce, was going to cost \$4.2 billion and that the estimate was not yet detailed and did not include the cost of transitioning all departments to the new system.

The Department of Public Works and Government Services announced in June 2025 that it was moving forward with a \$350.6-million contract with Dayforce. However, the Auditor General's report says it emerged in December 2025 that the cost of the contract had already nearly doubled to \$565.9 million, an increase of nearly \$200 million. Phoenix, a project that was supposed to cost \$309 million, ended up burning through \$5 billion of taxpayer money. Combined with Dayforce, which is scheduled to launch in 2031, the government will have spent \$9.2 billion, almost \$1 billion per year.

The Auditor General noted that Public Services and Procurement Canada did not even calculate the difference between the operating costs for Phoenix and Dayforce. Nobody even knows if it will save us money. This is essentially why we are calling for an independent public inquiry.

• (1015)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when we think of the Canada pension plan or the old age supplement programs, they are of critical importance. No one in Canada would even question that aspect.

The other aspect that I think needs to be raised in this whole process is how important it is that we modernize. We have to think of how times have changed and how we need to meet the challenge of that change.

The question I have for my friends in the Bloc is this: Can they give a clear indication if they are supportive of the principle of making that change?

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I did so right off the top. Once again, the member for Winnipeg North is being selective about what parts of this debate he listens to.

The issue is the federal government's ongoing difficulty determining up-front costs. There are cost overruns. I could point to other software systems, such as the Canada Border Services Agency's assessment and revenue management system, or CARM. The portal was supposed to cost \$400 million, but it had already gone up to \$700 million in July 2025. The Auditor General will be auditing it.

There is also ArriveCAN, which was supposed to cost \$80,000 but ended up costing \$60 million. This happens with every program. I honestly believe the government does not know how to assess its program costs and that taxpayers always end up footing the increasingly hefty bill.

• (1020)

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague for his excellent speech. I have a question for him about the impact on our seniors, who find themselves waiting for their benefits for six, seven or eight months. People have been talking about numbers a lot, but the human side of the story is just as important.

I would like my colleague to tell us a bit about the impact on our seniors.

Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I want to sincerely thank the member for Richmond—Arthabaska for his leadership on this issue. He has been raising it in the House for weeks and giving specific examples from his riding.

Let us talk numbers. The government is bragging about the fact that there were 85,000 cases but now there are 69,000 or even 63,000. That is the number we were given this morning. Should we be commending the government for that, as though it did a good job of managing this situation?

Behind these numbers, there are real people who are suffering. Why? The reason is that the software was poorly designed, and there were glitches and errors. With gas prices being what they are nowadays, imagine if someone budgeted for \$2 a litre but the gas ended up costing only \$1.80 a litre. Should they be commended? No. Every delay is unacceptable.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think we are debating a rather straightforward matter here today. It is not very complicated. We want to know whether we need an independent public inquiry on the Cúram fiasco. It is simple. The debate should be focused on that request.

One thing we have learned is that, when problems arose, public servants were told not to tell the public that they were caused by the Cúram software. Does the very fact that public servants were asked to lie to people not emphasize the need for an independent public inquiry?

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean put his finger on something absolutely crucial. How was

this managed internally? What instructions were public servants given? Were they given proper training in a timely manner? Were they given clear and accurate information?

There were cost overruns. The deputy minister told us today that about 5% of cases had errors. What is happening with the additional data on people who received overpayments? Oddly enough, no one seems to be talking about that. Where are the data on that? Is there transparency?

That is precisely the purpose of an independent public inquiry. Political games are being played here, which is why we need to shed light on this. We need an impartial judge who can conduct a thorough investigation, ask questions, ensure accountability and pass on clear documentation in order to get to the bottom of this situation.

We need to put political games and partisanship aside so that we, as taxpayers, pay less for dealings with IT firms.

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, PCC): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, who has been fighting vigorously alongside me from the beginning.

The Cúram financial fiasco is about more than just numbers. It affects human beings, seniors who have worked their entire lives, citizens who have paid their taxes for decades. Now they are being forced to wait for the pensions they are entitled to. Pensions are not a luxury. They are a necessity and a right. However, because of the problems with the Cúram system, 63,000 seniors are currently in limbo, facing stress they should not have to endure.

Initially, the project was supposed to cost \$1.75 billion. The total currently stands at \$6.6 billion. The question is simple. How could a situation like this have been allowed to spiral so badly out of control? How does the minister explain the fact that the project's costs jumped from \$1.75 billion to \$6.6 billion without triggering effective oversight mechanisms? Who approved those cost overruns? How much more is this broken IT system going to cost taxpayers? It is a waste of public funds.

Our job is to responsibly manage the money that Canadians send here. It is important to remember that every dollar we spend here comes out of Canadians' pockets. As I said, the real scandal is not just the cost; it is the impact that this is having on people. Our seniors are the ones who are dealing with these delays and who now have unpaid bills. We know that the cost of groceries is problematic, and now some seniors' fridges are empty.

How many Canadians are still waiting for their benefits because of the Cúram system? What is the actual average wait time to process a file right now? We are hearing about an eight- or nine-month wait. The government must be judged by the results it achieves, not its intentions. Right now, it is not getting any results.

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My biggest concern is that we have seen this scenario play out before with the Liberals. We had the major IT fiasco with the Phoenix system, and now, people are asking whether the government has learned from its mistakes. Have the Liberals learned from their mistakes? What concrete measures have been taken to ensure that Cúram does not turn into another Phoenix? Has the Liberal government put the lessons it learned from Phoenix into practice? If the government is ignoring the lessons of the past, it is dooming Canadians to relive the same mistakes, and that is unacceptable. A crisis of this magnitude demands transparency.

Canadians are entitled to know who made the decisions, who approved the contracts, who is currently supervising the decisions and the fiasco, and who is tracking the contracts. Are there any tracking dashboards in place? How many contracts have been awarded to external consultants, and how much are these contracts worth? Have administrative penalties been considered? It has emerged that some officials actually received performance bonuses. Is it not unbelievable that bonuses were paid? The public's trust can be earned, but it can also be lost quickly when there is no accountability.

Canadians do not just want explanations. They want solutions. They want to know when the situation is going to be resolved and what concrete plan is in place for stabilizing the Cúram platform. They want to know if there is a clear, publicly available timeline and how much more it will cost to fix the problem. We have heard about operating costs potentially jumping from \$600 million per year to \$1 billion per year. Were these costs budgeted for at the time the contract was awarded?

• (1025)

Licences for the Cúram platform will need to be renewed. Was that taken into account? Was employee training factored into the expenditures? This is a crisis without a plan, and the crisis is getting worse.

This file goes beyond technology. It has to do with trust. In politics, people's trust is the thing we hold most dear. We have to earn people's trust. We have to protect that trust and maintain credibility with our constituents. Right now, the Liberals' credibility in handling this crisis has been eroded.

I have been putting questions to the Prime Minister directly for two months now, because we are talking about the biggest financial scandal in history, with cost overruns of \$5 billion. For two months, I have been asking the Prime Minister to show leadership, take charge of this file and get to the bottom of the matter to see what is not working, implement solutions and create a crisis task force. We need some dashboards from which to track progress and outcomes.

Taxpayers deserve that. Taxpayers deserve strong stewardship, efficient services and clear answers. Right now, we do not have clear answers. My colleague and I have just had a question and answer session with the minister and we do not have a clear answer. I asked the minister to go out into the field and meet employees who use the Cúram platform, who have been telling us that the platform is not working. I got a letter from an employee who, naturally, wants to remain anonymous. He wrote to tell me that things are not working and that we have not seen the worst of it. The letter came from a government employee who uses the platform, and he is telling us that this is just the tip of the iceberg. That is disturbing.

I reached out to the minister. I offered to work with her and to go meet with employees on the ground so she could explain the Cúram issues to us in person, and so that we could put a team together to get results. The answer was no. The minister refused my offer to go meet with the employees. However, we here in the opposition will not give up. We will continue to stand up for Canadians because they have a right to their pensions. It is their money. The government owes it to them. Seniors, who built Canada and who built Quebec, should not have to wait like this for months on end. We will always be there to defend them.

This is the biggest Liberal financial scandal ever. The Prime Minister needs to show some leadership out of respect for Canadians. He needs to take charge of this situation and shed light on this file so that our seniors can be paid for the work they have done to build this country.

• (1030)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the member refers to the Phoenix issue. It was during the Phoenix conversion that Stephen Harper and the current leader changed, released or fired 400-plus public servants dealing with human resources. I can tell the member opposite that when they left and turned on the switch to the conversion to the new system, I received numerous calls in regard to the Phoenix system. I have yet to receive any call from a senior raising this particular issue with me. This is not to deny that there are seniors.

That is one of the reasons the minister has been appealing to opposition members, if they have situations, to bring them to the minister's attention. At the end of the day, it is a huge program that is ultimately modernizing an important system. Does the member support the modernization?

[*Translation*]

Eric Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, my colleague is denying that there is a problem just because he has not received any calls. He has not gotten any calls, so the problem does not exist. Some 85,000 seniors are affected. The government has known about this for months. Again this morning, the minister told us that more than 63,000 seniors are waiting. My colleague is saying that no one has been calling him about it and so everything is just fine.

Canadians deserve more respect than that. Just because one MP did not get any calls in their riding does not mean that the problem does not exist elsewhere in the country.

I would invite my colleague to raise the level of the debate in this House.

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Richmond—Arthabaska for his wise words.

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This member has special expertise because he served in the Quebec National Assembly, where IT cost overruns are taken seriously. When there were cost overruns of \$500 million for SAAQclie, an inquiry was conducted. The Quebec government took that situation seriously. Heads rolled and the Government of Quebec learned from its mistakes. Why? It was so that it would not make those same mistakes again. The Quebec National Assembly adopted a unanimous motion calling on the federal government to conduct an independent inquiry. That is the subject of this debate.

Will my colleague support this motion to hold an independent public inquiry? Can he tell us why it is so important to do so?

Eric Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, I also want to thank my colleague for his keen interest in this issue and for his commitment to standing up for our seniors in this place.

Naturally, the proposal for an independent commission of inquiry is of paramount importance. We are talking about the biggest Liberal financial scandal in history. We have a duty to shed light on this matter and use every means necessary to do so. This commission of inquiry is one way to find solutions that can finally shed light on this matter.

Once again, I thank my colleague.

• (1035)

Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague and my Bloc Québécois colleague. I think they are doing great work. We also see that this is not a political issue. It is an issue that people really want to see resolved.

I know that my colleague is close to his constituents. The Liberals seem oblivious to what is happening on the ground. I would like to ask my colleague whether any constituents have spoken to him. I think it must be mentally difficult not to receive a cheque. I would like my colleague to tell us about some of the cases in his riding.

Eric Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, I would be happy to talk about a specific case. I already talked about Martial Lavoie here in the House; he has been waiting for benefits for eight or nine months. That is just one case among many in my riding. People are contacting me. This man always got a recorded message when he tried calling the government. This morning, we asked what the average wait time was. We were told it was a little over 20 minutes. Using the Radio-Canada article, I showed the officials that my constituent's wait time was one hour and 27 minutes. That is the reality on the ground right now.

It is not normal for a member of Parliament to have to take charge of this issue in order to resolve it. Investing \$6.6 billion in a system that is not working is not going to fix the problem.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, I take some offence when the member tries to give the false impression that I do not support or am not concerned about seniors. I spend a great deal of my time and effort defending and advocating for seniors, and every week, I address many different issues that seniors face today.

When I highlighted the fact that there was not one call or one senior who approached me from Winnipeg North, it was put into the context of the Phoenix issue, which was under Stephen Harper. Under that system, I received many calls as a local member of Parliament in Winnipeg North. I think we have to put it into the proper perspective. We understand, as a government, how important the benefits are, whether for individuals on unemployment, seniors collecting OAS or pensioners collecting CPP. That is the motivating factor for the government to take the actions that are necessary.

Now, we see the Conservatives opposite take the approach that we should not change the system. They believe that the old system is better and that we should just stick with it. However, when we take a look at the millions of Canadians who are very dependent on receiving that money, I would ultimately argue that this is why we should be pushing forward on this issue. At the end of the day, this is what motivates me in terms of the types of things that the government is doing.

For seniors or those on unemployment, we need to look at ways to modernize the system so that people will receive benefits in a timely fashion. However, when we make a change of this nature, we cannot believe that we are going to have 100% accuracy or that there is not going to be any individual who will go through a great deal of discomfort. Unfortunately, yes, it will happen. As with every system, even the current system that is there, we will find that there are complaints, but this should not cause us to be so fearful that we oppose modernization. To oppose modernization is to put our heads in the sand and not recognize the future needs of, for example, our seniors and individuals who are unemployed. It is a good thing that the government has taken action. It is a good thing that the government looks at such ways when there is a need to spend extra to protect the security of making sure that those payments are made. I do not see that as a bad thing.

I will highlight what the department, from a caucus perspective, has to say in regard to this particular initiative. The Government of Canada is dedicated to simplifying and improving how Canadians access core government benefits and services. This process is to ensure that Canadians continue to receive the benefits they rely on. We are talking about things such as old age security, the Canada pension plan and employment insurance.

As I have indicated, the benefits delivery modernization program is the largest transformation initiative ever undertaken by the Government of Canada. Its success is one of the government's highest priorities. As I explained, why it is such a high priority is that we are talking about the vulnerable in our society.

I would like to take this time to highlight some of the key historical milestones of this program, what it has accomplished and its overall importance to Canadians. I will also share with Canadians why programs of this scope and scale are done and achieved correctly.

Routine Proceedings

● (1040)

The technology foundation of Canada's legacy benefits system is obsolete and has become increasingly difficult to maintain. I believe the Conservatives might oppose that principle, but it is the reality. The old age security system is more than 60 years old and eligible for retirement, quite frankly. The employment insurance system is actually 50 years old, and the Canada pension plan system is 20 years old.

As far back as 2010, the Auditor General report raised the alarm that this system needed to be modernized and failure to do so would endanger the benefits that Canadians rely on. That was back in 2010. Where was the leader of the Conservative Party back in 2010? He was sitting around the government's caucus, which chose to do nothing even though this was flagged as far back as then. That reinforces the idea that modern-day Conservatives have stayed away, without recognizing the true value and need for change.

A study of that report by several standing committees, including public accounts, concluded that upgrades are critical to ensuring that Canadians receive the benefits they so much rely on. We took action to ensure that millions of Canadians who rely on these critical benefits receive them on time and without interruption. Every policy change added a new code and complexities to the legacy system, and built a technical debt.

This technical debt is what the government is actively and ferociously addressing. The cost of not properly maintaining and upgrading those platforms would mean an inability for Canadians to make ends meet. It is not an option, unless one is a Conservative, of course. It is not an option. These changes have to be made. Simply put, addressing technical debt allows our government to invest more in Canadians while spending less in delivering the benefits Canadians rely so much on.

We also know that failing Canadians is not an option for the Prime Minister, this government or any Liberal member of Parliament. We began this modernization journey knowing that switching from the old technology to more modern systems actually has significant risks. Whenever we make a change of this magnitude, we have to expect that there are going to be factors of risk that are at play. We knew it would be a time-consuming and complex process. We needed to prevent these already fragile and ancient systems from reaching a point of failure and interrupting Canadians' access to their benefits. That would have been the ultimate tragedy. That is the direction we were going in if we were not prepared to modernize.

The platform that was selected, Cúram, was selected through an open and competitive process, in collaboration with the Department of Public Services and Procurement. The procurement adhered to the requirements set out by the Treasury Board. We needed a platform designed specifically for social programs, and Cúram delivers. It has proven to be a product with an excellent track record. It has been successful at implementing 970 government social programs in 12 countries, in 14 languages, with 187 million citizens served and protected in one way or another. Those are incredible numbers that often get overlooked by opposition members.

Canadians deserve a government that invests in systems that ensure their benefits are delivered accurately and protected for gener-

ations to come, but we could not achieve that with outdated mid-20th-century technology, with legacy systems that were designed before man even landed on the moon, quite frankly.

● (1045)

To us, modernization means accessible services for all Canadians, no matter where they live, in cities, towns and remote northern areas. Canadians expect a high level of convenient service when dealing with their government and the benefits their government delivers. That is precisely why we are bringing our benefits platform into today's more efficient digital world while maintaining the safety and integrity of Canadians' personal information, which is so critically important. Nowadays, we talk a great deal about protecting personal information. In the past number of years, how many debates have I participated in where we have talked about personal information and the security thereof?

The point is the complexity of the data and the type of information that has to be fed into the programming. There is a lot online. We are modernizing old age security, employment insurance and the Canada pension plan through a phased approach, with the expected completion date in and around 2030-31, with a singular goal of migrating these three benefits together into one secure, user-friendly platform, one that Canadians can rely on for generations to come. That is the bottom line: a system that is supported by cutting-edge security software, tested in several countries and allowing clients to manage their information seamlessly online.

The Government of Canada has enhanced the business continuity plan to make sure Canadians are not left without their benefits. Rigorous testing takes place to make sure the program is on track. This includes a trial period occurring before anything gets migrated onto a larger scale. We have checks, balances and contingencies to mitigate any potential project delay, with a rigorous testing process to ensure that benefits are fully migrated and delivered accurately to Canadians. Before any new services go live, final decisions would be taken by the deputy minister in consultation with the project team.

We have a great deal to lose by not moving forward with modernization. As has been pointed out, this is important money. We are talking about hundreds of millions, going into billions of dollars of financial support being delivered to Canadians. Modernization is not optional. We look to both the opposition and the Bloc to recognize that. Yes, it is not 100% foolproof. Some issues will need to be brought to the attention of the floor of the House, but to suggest that there is a need to have a public inquiry, at the very least, is premature.

Routine Proceedings

At the end of the day, we have some of the best, if not the best, civil servants working within the different sectors to ensure that we have a modernized system that will ultimately be there for future generations and seniors and the unemployed, for example, today. Members of the Liberal Party and the government want to see this advance. At the end of the day, it is good for Canadians. It is long overdue and something we should all get behind, promote and encourage.

In situations where seniors are in hardship, then let us talk about them. They should be brought to our attention and served the way we serve our constituents in multiple different ways. In my case, I do a lot of immigration work. At the end of the day, we are there to serve our constituents, so when they have problems, we can assist them in getting what they require, whenever possible.

• (1050)

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, to be honest, I suspect that the government still thinks it can pull a fast one on us. With that in mind, I think that the parliamentary secretary is once again putting himself in the minister's shoes and saying that Cúram is worth celebrating. The problem is clear: The federal government does not have the necessary expertise.

According to an article in *La Presse*, a public servant costs an average of \$162,000 a year, including benefits and retirement. The \$6.6 billion that Cúram is costing could pay for 3,133 federal employees for 13 years. These employees could then ensure that every person receives their old age security benefits.

The reason we are here today is not complicated. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts passed a unanimous motion. By "unanimous", I mean that the motion also had the support of the Liberal members. Does the member for Winnipeg North agree that we need to move forward? Will he be voting in favour of today's motion for an independent public inquiry into the cost of this system?

The \$6.6-billion price tag for the system is equivalent to five times the budget for *Grand Theft Auto*, which cost \$1.4 billion to make and is considered the most technically complex game ever made. It is equivalent to 13,200 build Canada homes programs, 21 F-35As and 3 Champlain Bridges. That is the scale of what this cost represents. That is why an independent public inquiry is necessary. I could also mention CARM, Dayforce, Phoenix and all the other examples. That is why the system needs to be changed.

Will my colleague fall in with this proposal?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I totally disagree with the need for a public inquiry. I do not understand why Bloc members feel we cannot have a more effective standing committee, potentially, dealing with the concerns the member is raising today. At the end of the day, they want to spend x millions of dollars on a public inquiry, when we have a standing committee made up of members of Parliament who are already paid to do the work of sitting on the committee. They should see if they can get it onto an

agenda. We should be more productive where we can. Standing committees have great potential here in Parliament.

I believe we should take a look at the bottom line results and the millions of individuals who have already benefited through the program itself. As I have pointed out, there are going to be some issues that will come to the surface, but members should take a look at the magnitude of the program itself. At the very least, let us recognize that there is a role for standing committees of the House of Commons to be able to deal with some of the issues or concerns that the Bloc members have.

Gaétan Malette (Kapusking—Timmins—Mushkegowuk, CPC): Madam Speaker, why do we need an inquiry? To keep it very simple, it is because of the attitude and the answers we are getting that nothing is wrong. That is why.

• (1055)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I was in opposition for many, many years. For most of my political career, I have been in opposition, and I can tell members that a lot depends on the questions we are looking at and what is taking place in the committee itself. If the member is genuine about working co-operatively, I question why he would be demanding a public inquiry.

It seems to me, and I reflect on the last number of years in particular, that the Conservatives are eager to jump up and down and try to associate corruption to anything. By doing that, they then lead into character assassination. As opposition members, they are entitled to do that, but the government and the Prime Minister need to continue to be focused on the issues facing Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, honestly, as I listen to what the member for Winnipeg North is saying, I get the impression that everyone is to blame except the Liberals. It is the fault of seniors that they are not receiving their benefits. It is the civil servants' fault for not implementing the program properly, because the instructions were so clear. To me, there is a problem.

I heard something interesting in my colleague's response: Parliamentarians are not doing all they can right now and they should be the ones looking into this issue. We can have a debate to determine whether an independent public inquiry is the best approach. I sincerely believe that it is, because it would move this debate outside the parliamentary sphere, and experts could examine the issue in depth. However, the parliamentary secretary just said that he agrees that parliamentarians should look into the matter further. This morning, a motion was moved at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

My question is very simple. My colleague will support that motion if he stands by his words and if his vote aligns with those of his Liberal colleagues.

Routine Proceedings

Here is the motion:

That the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities ask the Department of Jobs and Families, the Department of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, the Privy Council Office and the Office of the Prime Minister to forward to the committee clerk, within 30 days of the adoption of this motion, all reports, correspondence, emails and documents related to the management of the benefits delivery modernization program since January 1, 2017, and that the departments and offices tasked with producing the documents apply redactions as per legal obligations under the Privacy Act and Access to Information Act.

Will the Liberals be consistent and transparent?

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I acknowledge and appreciate that the member has indicated that maybe the public inquiry is not necessary and that there are other alternatives. That is what the member has implied. I respect that. At the end of the day, hopefully we can build a consensus that this modernization, which would be the largest of its kind ever in the history of Canada, needs to be afforded the opportunity to go through.

As I say, it would not be complete until 2030-31. That would provide us the optimal time to actually review and take a look at how it has been ultimately implemented. Millions and millions of Canadians are dependent on this thing's being a success, and there are all sorts of opportunities in our standing committees, in a proactive, positive way, to be able to contribute to its success. That is going to be up to the membership of the standing committee. I believe that, with the right attitude going into it from both government and opposition, there is a lot that can be contributed to this. Over the next few years, I look forward to those discussions that would take place in the standing committee.

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member speaks as if this is something that should take five, six or 10 years to complete. He is talking about 2030-31, as if we are supposed to be looking forward to really accomplishing something five or six years from now. I do not know that he can look seniors in the face in his own riding and say that we are going to get it straight and that they should come back around in about five or six years, and then we will see if we can get the cheque they need every month sorted out for them.

The member also speaks about, and this is interesting, the standing committees of Parliament. He does not currently sit on a standing committee of Parliament, so I give him a bit of leeway. If he did, he would know that for any suggestion of any opposition member, whether it is a member of the Bloc or the Conservative Party, any amendments we propose, the Liberals very cleverly vote against them. If they do not get their way in a standing committee, they just bring it to the House and get the NDP to vote for them and vote us down anyway.

In terms of getting meaningful amendments across and actually listening to what other members of Parliament have to offer in order to make legislation better, the member and his party always vote against.

My question to the member is simply this: Why is it taking so long to get this program? He says it is the biggest ever in the history of Canada. There are other countries around the world that are a

lot bigger than Canada, and the member knows very well that it does not take them five, 10 or 15 years to get a program right.

• (1100)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we talk about the conclusion of the program in four to five years, when it would be fully implemented. Noting that, I would talk to any senior in Canada about the importance of making sure that, as we implement the program, it would be done in such a way that it would have a marginal negative impact on any senior and on anyone who is unemployed. It is not something for which we just throw something in, which could lead to huge problems. To try to fix a system in a crisis situation would cost a whole lot more.

In regard to the standing committees, when the Conservatives had a majority government, there were never any amendments from the opposition that were passed.

Under the Prime Minister, there have been amendments passed at standing committees. Even in the previous Parliament, under Justin Trudeau, amendments were passed at standing committees. I would suggest that the potential for members of Parliament on both sides of the House at standing committees is really quite impressive, if in fact the will of the committee membership on both sides of the House is one of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

[Translation]

Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I wish to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Shefford. I also want to thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois for moving the concurrence motion today. I believe this issue is truly important to Canadians. I am always happy to speak out against government waste.

[English]

I am very fortunate to have had the position of shadow minister for the Treasury Board for three and a half years. I am very grateful that the Leader of the Opposition gave me the role all that time ago. At the time, he told me it was a result not only of my Master of Business Administration degree but also of the time I had spent as a public servant within the federal government.

I have been following these issues and the waste for close to four years, and we see these consistent problems with the government time and time again. What I have learned is that Canadians hate two things. There are many other issues they disagree on or perhaps do not have consensus on, but Canadians hate waste, first of all, and they hate inefficiency. I have some data to support that. A poll by Arcus indicates that 73.9% of Canadians believe that the federal government is inefficient, and 50% believe in making government more efficient without reducing services. Canadians recognize the waste and inefficiency of the current government. This is something it has a very good track record of and has chosen time and time again in the many situations where they have failed.

Routine Proceedings

Just this week, the Auditor General tabled her evaluation of modernizing the pay system. This is a major project, with \$4.2 billion of Canadian taxpayer funds being used to overhaul the system, yet the government is failing. It is failing to do the transfer from the old system to the new system, and that is costing Canadians \$4 million a year. Over several years, this is millions of dollars to add to the \$4.2-billion project.

With that, it is a significant failure. There is currently still a backlog of 235,000 cases, with many of them more than a year old. The Auditor General went on to say that the government “need[s] to simplify and standardize pay rules before introducing a new system”, something the government should have learned from the Phoenix evaluation and the Phoenix fiasco but did not learn.

The government continues to waste Canadian taxpayer dollars and continues to be inefficient. Worst of all, it is not learning the lessons. We saw that in the presentation of the Auditor General's report on Monday, but not just there.

In 2025, the Auditor General also tabled the review of the ArriveCAN application. Again, her report showed more of the same, with the Liberals not having learned their lesson when it comes to being able to deliver effective and efficient services for Canadians. In addition, they have a significant problem enforcing their own rules. Not only are the Liberals incompetent, but they are also unable to provide a clear standard of service across their government when improving something or implementing something.

The examples in the ArriveCAN review included that 21% of the individuals who were brought in to work on the project lacked security clearance, 33% of contracts could not show contract resources had the experience and the qualifications needed to complete the required work, and 58% did not document assessment of evaluation of ongoing bids. Again, this is a waste. The Liberals are not doing a comparison of value for money to see whether they are receiving the best bid, the best value for money.

Fifty per cent of individuals in the sample did not have adequate security clearance, in addition to the 21% with no security clearance; 58% had poorly documented time sheets of individuals who submitted documents within the project; and 82% of federal organizations could not prove that fees did not exceed the market rates.

• (1105)

This is why the Liberals are failing as a government. They are incapable of achieving market rates, something that small businesses, medium-sized businesses and large corporations have as a practice and must do within Canada. The Liberals are not capable of doing it, and they are not capable of learning how to do it, as these repeated reports of failure keep coming in from the Auditor General and elsewhere.

In only 54% of contracts could the government prove that deliverables were received. When we go to the grocery store and pay for a tomato, we have the tomato. When we buy a T-shirt, we have the T-shirt. The government could not do this. It could not prove that it actually received what it had paid for.

We can point to another example if we go back to the 2024 ArriveCAN report, which stated that the Canada Border Services

Agency, the Public Health Agency, and Public Services and Procurement Canada repeatedly failed to follow good management practices in the contracting, development and implementation of the ArriveCAN application. As a result of the many gaps and weaknesses, the Auditor General found issues with the project's design, oversight and accountability, and stated that it did not deliver the best value for the taxpayer dollars spent. Again we see the waste and the inefficiency.

The enduring benefit of the ArriveCAN application cannot be proven, and, thank goodness, as of October 2022, ArriveCAN has no longer been used to collect travellers' health and contact information, although I do think I have seen it recently. It goes further back than that, to the 2023 Auditor General report on the transformation of systems delivering critical benefits to Canadians, the benefits delivery modernization program, which had experienced repeated delays, cost increases and staff challenges since its launch in 2017.

We always hear the Liberals blaming the previous administration. They have had a decade now to clean up what was reported on the modernization pay system. There is a new system in addition to Phoenix, called Dayforce, which the Liberals are failing on as well. Going back to the benefits delivery modernization system, we are seeing failure in a benefits system, failure in a system that was supposed to help Canadians at a critical time in our history, and then failure for public servants in the pay system. There is a history of failure with the government.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, I have been in this role for a long time now, and I have consistently seen three problems with the government. I will summarize them.

Number one is that the government really likes to get its friends to do things. We saw this with McKinsey in the last Parliament. We could pull in so many different government departments, such as immigration, housing and infrastructure, that use their friends from McKinsey. If we go to our friend, are we going to get a good deal? No, we are not. The government wants to help its close friends and insiders. The Canadian taxpayer loses. The Canadian taxpayer does not benefit when the government gets a good deal for its friend.

Number two is that the Liberals are incapable of maintaining a project within its scope and not having an overrun. All three of the examples in the reports I have mentioned today have shown overruns and a lack of capacity to get things done efficiently, on time and within the parameters that were described.

Finally, number three, is that no one in the government ever takes accountability. It is always the last administration's fault or some director general's fault. We saw this with ArriveCAN. The government would rather ruin the life of an individual than take accountability for the mistakes it made.

We see time and time again with the current government that it is incapable of efficiency, and it does nothing but waste the money of the taxpayer. All these examples prove it. I am happy to stand up here and talk on and on about that today, because it is so easy to.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very insightful remarks. It is refreshing to hear someone talk about transparency and accountability in the House.

The Cúram software was known to have glitches. Five countries have adopted the Cúram system and experienced significant glitches. Australia has been dealing with Cúram glitches for 20 years. The same goes for Ontario. In 2015, a report by the Auditor General of Ontario said that Cúram was flawed. In 2017, the government decided to implement Cúram anyway. Who was the minister at the time? I wonder. I am just throwing that out there because we cannot name names. Now, under a new Prime Minister and after 10 years of Liberal government, computer glitches and non-existent monitoring and forecasting, the current Prime Minister is reappointing the same minister and giving her the same responsibility, namely Employment and Social Development Canada.

Who is responsible for Cúram? Should there be an independent public inquiry to get to the truth?

Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I think we agree. That is why we are having this debate today. It is because we agree that there are serious problems. The government is incapable of avoiding waste and lacks the ability to do things right.

As my colleague said, we could look for examples of good projects and improve the way things are done, but right now, that is not an option under this government. Like my colleague, I want to note that the Liberals have been in power for over 10 years. It is unbelievable.

We agree that we must continue to demand that our government do better.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member said that we could have done better. It would be no surprise to the member that, at the end of the day, I think that the principle of doing better could apply universally to any provincial or federal government, not just now, but also historically. We can always do better. That is one of the reasons why I would ultimately argue that there is a potential role for opposition members and government to work well at standing committees to try to get some of the answers the member is looking for.

Does the Conservative Party support the principle of modernization with respect to what is happening?

Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, what I support is a government that chooses to do better. That was the trademark of the Liberals' previous prime minister. In the previous iteration of the government, which continues to this day, that was the mantra, that it could do better.

Routine Proceedings

Does doing better mean 2.2 million Canadians going to the food bank? Does doing better mean an \$80-billion deficit? Does doing better mean 100,000 job losses in a single month?

I continue to urge the government, and the member, to try to do better, because for a decade it said it was going to, and it has not.

• (1115)

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague hit the nail on the head with respect to how the government looks at Parliament and how it acts when it comes to having to do something as important as the system we are talking about today.

My question for my hon. colleague is simply this: Why does she think the government would not say that it has made a mistake and that it did not do a good job?

Being humble is a good attribute. Why do the Liberals not just say that they did not do a good job and they did not want to listen to us at the standing committee? Why do the Liberals not just ask us to help them get the job done right? There are seniors, people and families across the country who are so dependent on the system that they are unfortunately suffering as a consequence of the lack of action from the government.

Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, the government does not care. It does not care about Canadians. It does not care that there are 2.2 million Canadians going to the food bank. It is willing to waste \$80 billion of your money just this year alone. It is willing to allow 100,000 people in a single month, your dad, your brother, your son, to go without a job. If it really cared, it would try to do better, and it does not.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I want to remind the hon. member to speak through the Chair. None of those statements apply to me.

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Shefford.

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to address this issue with a great deal of compassion today.

I will start with a bit of history. After I was first elected in 2019, I was deeply affected by one of the first cases I dealt with in my office. It was the case of a young woman who came to my office in tears, carrying her infant in a car seat. I handed her a tissue box and invited her in. This mother, who had just started her maternity leave and had a baby to support, was not getting her benefits as a federal employee because of the new Phoenix pay system. This woman was going through a profound personal crisis, when she should have been spending this time cherishing her little one. That really stuck with me.

Routine Proceedings

Then, during the pandemic, ArriveCAN came along. Once again, there were problems. In the case of Phoenix, money was not being paid to the people who needed it. In the case of ArriveCAN, there were cost overruns that were brought to our attention during the pandemic. Now we have the Cúram fiasco.

I would like to point out that the first person to alert me to the situation was Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné, whose work in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts I would like to commend. Since she knew that I was concerned about the situation of seniors, she warned me at the start of 2025 that some seniors would have a hard time receiving their benefits. She also brought my attention to cost overruns associated with the new pension management program, Cúram.

It was then that my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, whom I commend, and his assistant Jean-François picked up the ball. They worked very hard on research and investigative work. They, too, knowing that I was concerned about the situation of seniors, told me that some seniors would experience hardship because they would not receive their benefits or would receive them late.

Of course, we are aware of the scale and scope of the system. It is a fact that between 7.1 million and 7.5 million seniors collect OAS. It is also a fact that \$9.4 billion is paid out annually. Projections show that 9.4 million seniors will be receiving this pension by 2030, for a total of \$105 billion in benefits.

Obviously, one might ask what the situation is with delays and backlogs. In January, there was a backlog of 85,537 cases. We were told that, in February, that number was down to 69,180. According to other internal sources, 69,000 seniors have been impacted. The minister said the number of cases has dropped to 63,000. Here is an important definition: A case is considered delayed when it has not been processed by the date of eligibility or within 60 days. With Cúram, these timelines have been significantly exceeded.

Let us turn to the system's performance before and after Cúram. Before Cúram, 87.5% of benefits were paid within the first month, and the government target was 90%. It is not clear whether the current performance is better, and there is nothing to show a clear improvement. We are starting to have questions that may come up in an independent public inquiry, such as the one we are calling for today in the House.

There is also the issue of ballooning costs that we would like to examine closely. The original estimate in 2017 was \$1.75 billion. This was revised to \$2.5 billion, an increase of more than 43%. According to one estimate, the costs could reach \$3.4 billion. The actual expenditures incurred by 2025 are expected to be \$4.4 billion. Currently, the figure being quoted is \$6.6 billion, and we could very well reach that amount.

We now know that the cost of the project was underestimated from the beginning. Even worse, the Auditor General raised the alarm about the cost overruns back in 2023. Things always have to come out in the media before this Liberal government takes action. The government will not intervene until it has no choice. I will come back to that. The main problem I wanted to highlight first is the fact that the project cost was underestimated from the beginning.

The estimated operating costs are about \$60 million per year, but officials are unable to provide the cost per transaction or the actual operating costs. It would be useful to look at these aspects as part of an independent public inquiry. A system was built without anyone knowing how much it would actually cost to operate.

● (1120)

That is what we asked about, and we hope to get answers. This morning, in committee, we said we wanted some potential solutions and some answers. If we do not get them there, we will need to get them through an independent public inquiry.

In terms of the migration and deployment, 7.5 million beneficiaries are being transferred to Cúram. According to internal tests, the accuracy rate is allegedly 99.9%, but again, there is a contradiction between the successful tests and the on-the-ground reality of widespread delays. The 85,000 cases we knew about at the start were too many, and there are still 63,000 outstanding. Those cases involve people who need their pension to pay for rent and groceries. It is far from a luxury for everyone. We know that there are tragedies unfolding. What is the reality on the ground? What is the reality behind the widespread delays? That is another area we would need to explore.

As far as human resources are concerned, although 5,300 employees have been trained, 93% of public servants have given the system a failing grade. In fact, I commend the public servants who said last June that problems were on the horizon and that seniors were not getting their benefits. Again, it was whistle-blowers within the public service who spoke out about the situation. It was the public service union that spoke out against it. We know from their testimony that training for public servants is insufficient, that there are daily computer glitches and that this is affecting mental health.

As my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue also mentioned, we also know that there are problems with the French language and translation, making the public servants' jobs harder. The system is not designed to take into account Quebec's unique linguistic reality, the French language, or our distinctiveness when it comes to social programs, given all the programs we have. The system does not take our separate pension systems into account.

There are real human consequences. Some seniors are waiting up to nine months for their first payment. We also know that some payments are late or incomplete. The amounts are sometimes wrong, with some seniors receiving overpayments. What will the tax implications be? We do not really know yet, but we know that there will be some. Still, given the systemic issues that have been identified, we know that there is inconsistent data. That is what we are being told. We are hearing about direct deposits, tax data and the fact that information is missing from some files. Those are the answers we are hearing. We are told that there are problems accessing certain proofs of residency, for example, and that officials are dependent on systems built 50 or 60 years ago. All of this could have been prevented with better planning, and that is what we are criticizing the government for.

Routine Proceedings

There are major demographic issues. There were 7.5 million seniors in Canada in 2023, and that number is expected to rise to nearly 20 million by 2066. Seniors will make up 30% of the population. The other issue that should be investigated through an inquiry is the fact that the system is already in trouble, and demand is set to skyrocket. Will the system be able to handle it?

We also know that this will have knock-on effects on other federal systems, such as EI, which is governed by much more complex legislation. The application forms are very complex, but when someone ends up collecting EI, that is a critical time in their life. If people entitled to EI do not get their EI payments, what happens then?

Essentially, the minister is saying that seniors themselves are to blame. The reason for the delays is that they are not filling out their forms correctly, so they should stop using paper forms. We all know that digital literacy is an issue. For people in general in our society who have to use these systems, switching from paper to online is not that easy. It is more complex than that, and the government must recognize that this is an issue for people.

There is also the wait time to get help over the phone. It is supposed to take 20 to 25 minutes, but in reality, people are waiting an hour or more. I have Conservative colleagues who have cases in their ridings where people report having waited longer than the expected 20 to 25 minutes. Finally, we also know that seniors in rural areas are underserved.

I have one last thing to say. There have been failures elsewhere, such as in Ontario. That, too, has been mentioned. The government was unable to take this into account to avoid repeating those mistakes. We know there was even a National Assembly motion in support of an independent public inquiry because Quebec's MNAs also want to get to the bottom of this. It is a matter of respect for seniors and for taxpayers.

• (1125)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member started her speech by talking about a situation in which a young lady visited her constituency office in tears. I would ultimately argue that the reason this modernization is so critically important is the need to provide the service not only for today, but for future generations. The service should be available for people who collect employment insurance, old age supplements and Canada pensions, which are the programs in place to support vulnerable Canadians. These are programs that are there because seniors have dedicated so much of their lives to building Canada into what it is today. By bringing in the system, we are providing assurance.

Does the member not agree that this modernization is a good thing?

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche: Madam Speaker, of course, we have to modernize our systems. The problem is that this modernization was poorly planned and poorly executed. In my speech, I raised a lot of

questions that could have been asked beforehand, questions that we still do not have answers to.

The reason we are calling for an independent public inquiry is so that we can find out what was not done properly in the planning stages and what could be fixed. It seems as though the government is putting more energy into sweeping this problem under the rug than it is into solving it.

First, there was Phoenix, with its cost overruns and federal employees speaking out. Then, there was the ArriveCAN app. It has been scandal after scandal. Yes, seniors deserve respect, but we also need to think about the taxpayers who are footing the bill and who feel as though their money is always being squandered.

[*English*]

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the first issues I raised in Parliament six and a half years ago was about the outdated technology system for the employment insurance, CPP and EI model through Employment and Social Development Canada. Unfortunately, the Government of Canada continues to face these horrible situations because the Treasury Board guidelines for technology employees specifically have not been modernized.

The Government of Canada relies so heavily on outsourced consultants because the pay scales do not allow for the Government of Canada to hire the experts. What it ends up doing is going to those experts, who charge them over \$1,000 and sometimes \$2,000 a day to do the work, instead of changing the Treasury Board guidelines and allowing those people to come into the public service.

Would the member for Shefford agree that if the Government of Canada wants to stop running into all these scandals, all this mismanagement, it would update the guidelines for the Treasury Board Secretariat to hire the best and the brightest in Ottawa to do the necessary technology upgrades the Government of Canada needs?

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. That is probably also a big part of the problem. During the last election campaign, the Bloc Québécois called for cutbacks in the use of outside consultants, because it leads to both money being wasted and contracts being awarded under questionable circumstances. Furthermore, it leads to a loss of expertise within the public service.

Modernization is certainly necessary, but, as my colleague said, we must also stop constantly turning to outside consultants, because we lose a great deal of expertise that way, and that is how we end up with financial scandals and cost overruns. We should also listen to public servants.

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Shefford for her being so compassionate, for providing accurate information regarding the 85,000 affected seniors and for calling for answers and accountability from this government.

Routine Proceedings

Speaking of government accountability, this morning, at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, we were told something that we have heard many times before: The government received warnings as early as 2010 that the system was facing a critical threat and that it needed to be reformed. Why then, did the government wait until 2025-26 to roll out a new system?

We need to remember that, nearly every year, the auditors general questioned whether the government was taking this seriously and indicated that the departments and agencies were all doing things their own way without any real coordination. Is the mess we are in with the old age security system a consequence of that?

I would also like to remind the House of the government's dependence on firms like Deloitte, which was telling the IT group how to do things; IBM, which was making programming errors and lining its own pockets; and McKinsey, which carried out the comparative analysis of services to the public. It is clear that there have been problems.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, first of all, as I said, there has been a loss of expertise within the government. It has been shifted to external consultants. Perhaps the government should have listened more closely to the public servants who raised concerns about the Phoenix system. It is clear that their comments were not taken into account.

I would also like to address the fact that the government tried to downplay the situation. There was talk of 85,000 cases. Initially, that was not what the minister told the House, and it took a few weeks before we got the truth. We finally managed to obtain this information about the 85,000 cases in committee. We were told that it was zero point something per cent. At first, the Liberals downplayed it and refused to answer questions during question period. It took some hard work in committee, which is why I want to acknowledge the efforts of my colleague, who succeeded in getting his committee to call for this independent public inquiry.

That is what we are debating today in the hope of shedding light on all this.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until later this day at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

PETITIONS

FLOOD SECURITY

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition on behalf of the residents of Abbotsford and the Fraser Valley, who are highly vulnerable to flooding due to low-lying geography adjacent to the Fraser River and tributaries. Recent severe flood events have caused widespread damage to homes, businesses, agricultural lands and critical infrastructure in the region. Flooding disrupts critical supply chains and trade routes, impacting not only local but also regional and national economies. The existing flood protection infrastructure, including dykes, levees and the drainage system, is aging and inadequate to withstand current and future flood risks.

Therefore, the undersigned citizens and permanent residents of Canada call upon the Government of Canada not to ignore Abbotsford any longer and to invest in the critical infrastructure needed to protect this key economic corridor for the entirety of Canada.

SENIORS

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to present this petition today from thousands of Canadians who identify themselves as single seniors. There is a growing number of Canadians who are doing that. Related to the treatment of single seniors under the federal income tax system, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to amend certain tax measures affecting pension income, tax credits and the treatment of registered retirement income on death, as set out in the petition. This is an important issue. I am sure all of my colleagues will support this kind of initiative as we move forward on improving our system of taxation.

• (1135)

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to present a petition from concerned Canadians across the country on government Bill C-9, the combatting hate act, which passed third reading yesterday in the House. The petitioners worry that amendments made by the government would limit religious expression, and they are concerned that the state would be interfering in the ability of faith communities to practise their faith. The petitioners fear that the changes could criminalize passages of the Bible and other sacred writings. In this petition, Canadians are asking the government to provide assurance that individuals of faith will not face criminal charges simply for reading, sharing and practising their faith, which are fundamental freedoms enshrined in the charter.

Routine Proceedings

PUBLIC SAFETY

Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to present a petition today on behalf of residents of Fairhaven, Meadowgreen, Parkridge and Confederation Park in Saskatoon, all of which have faced significant challenges as crime, chaos and disorder take over the neighbourhoods.

Violent crime is up 10% in Saskatoon, with increases in assaults, murders and robberies, and Saskatoon residents feel unsafe in their homes and on the streets. They are calling for the government to, first, reform the catch-and-release bail system to prevent dangerous, repeat and violent offenders from serving their sentences in their community; second, establish new indictable offences, reporting obligations and limitations on weapons possession for previous offenders who break conditions or are unlawfully at large; and third, pass legislation wherein an accused charged more than twice with certain indictable offences must be detained in custody while subject to a summons, appearance notice or release order.

SOUTHERN RESIDENT KILLER WHALES

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, members of my constituency of Saanich—Gulf Islands, as well as many adjacent areas, are very concerned about the fate of the southern resident killer whale, an extremely endangered species. These petitioners point out that once the whales swim to their other areas of occupation here and there, they are in Washington state. Washington state has far better protections for southern resident killer whales and other whales than we do in Canada.

The petitioners call on the Minister of Transport to implement mandatory vessel distance regulations to keep recreational and commercial vessels at least 1,000 metres away from the highly endangered southern resident killer whales. This is what they do in Washington state. This is one instance in which we should do something they do south of the border.

It is an honour to present this petition.

SALMON FISHERY

Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present multiple petitions.

The first petition is on behalf of Canadians who are deeply concerned about proposed changes to the salmon allocation policy, which would decimate public fishing opportunities for chinook and coho salmon in British Columbia. Changing the common property resource principle risks turning a shared public resource into an exclusive privilege, reducing access for many Canadians and undermining confidence in fisheries management. The petitioners note that it would be devastating to our tourism economy and the millions of dollars that flow into conservation efforts.

This petition calls upon the government to keep the common property resource principle in the revised salmon allocation policy so that salmon remain a publicly managed resource, federal stewardship stays transparent and conservation-focused, and no single group is given exclusive control over access.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the other five petitions I have today are from residents of Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies. They are concerned

about Bill C-9, which was passed in this House but is still going through the Senate.

They call upon the government to reject any amendments to Bill C-9 that remove the religious exemption from Canada's hate speech provisions, protect Canadians' constitutional rights to freedom of religion and expression and ensure that legislation does not criminalize good faith religious discourse or teaching.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition that has been signed by over 47,900 Canadians. The signatures come from every province and territory across Canada. The petition concerns individuals who came to Canada under temporary emergency immigration measures, such as the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel and similar programs under which people live and work in Canada on visas.

The petitioners note that many of these individuals have lived and worked in Canada for several years, contributing to our communities and economy. At the same time, they cannot return home due to circumstances beyond their control, and they face barriers in accessing permanent residency through existing pathways. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to consider establishing a dedicated one-time pathway to permanent residency for eligible individuals currently in Canada under these emergency measures.

I am pleased to present this petition to the House on behalf of the petitioners.

• (1140)

FIREARMS

Jim Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions on behalf of my constituents of Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt.

The first petition calls on the Government of Canada to cancel the firearms buyback program and, instead, focus its efforts on strengthening border security, combatting the illegal smuggling of firearms and targeting criminal activity rather than law-abiding firearms owners.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Jim Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in support of my colleague from Cloverdale—Langley City's private member's bill, Bill C-218.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners urge the government to support this bill, which would reverse the expansion of medical assistance in dying eligibility to individuals whose sole underlying medical condition is mental illness and, instead, prioritize access to appropriate treatment, care and mental health supports.

HIGHWAY 97

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling three petitions today on behalf of constituents from Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

The first petition has 1,600 signatures. Residents are asking for the federal government to partner with the province and provide funding for a secondary route from South Okanagan to Kelowna as an alternate to Highway 97. Highway 97 is the only major route between Penticton and Kelowna and has had repeated closures due to landslides, rock falls, accidents, fires and floods, which have caused serious safety risks for residents and visitors who have no alternative route to take to the hospital, schools and jobs. The federal government previously provided funding in partnership with the province to enhance safety trade routes, and the residents are asking for them to build this secondary route.

BOIL WATER ADVISORIES

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on behalf of the residents of Sage Mesa, in my riding in Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, and other communities across my riding and across Canada, who have been on boil water rationing and boil water regulations for many, many years.

Access to safe, affordable and clean drinking water should not continue to be an issue in Canada. Therefore, they are asking for immediate partnerships with the provincial and territorial governments to bring an end to boil water advisories across Canada for the delivery of clean drinking water.

SALMON FISHERY

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, finally, I am presenting a petition in which my constituents express a deep concern about the proposed changes to the salmon allocation policy that would decimate regular recreation fishing opportunities for coho and chinook in British Columbia. Constituents are calling upon the ministry of fisheries and oceans to leave the current salmon allocation policy alone and uphold the cultural rights and traditions of all British Columbians.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise again today to present another petition on behalf of Canadians opposed to government Bill C-9, which they see as a threat to freedom of religion and freedom of expression. We have seen the consequences of that in other jurisdictions. The petitioners are calling upon the government to withdraw this legislation.

Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too rise in the House to once again present a petition on behalf of Canadians from coast to coast who are gravely concerned with the passage of Bill C-9 through the House. Their concerns relate, in particular, to the Liberal-Bloc amendment pertaining to Bill C-9,

which was passed at the justice committee, that removes the good-faith religious defence clause from the Criminal Code of Canada.

Bill C-9 would allow the government to criminalize passages from the Bible, the Koran, the Torah and other sacred texts. Bill C-9 would allow the state to prosecute those who express deeply held religious beliefs the government finds offensive. The punishment for such charges is up to two years in prison.

The state has no place in the religious texts or teachings of any faith community. Freedom of expression and freedom of religion are fundamental rights that must be preserved. The petitioners ask that the government withdraw Bill C-9 to protect religious freedom and uphold the right to read and share and practice from their sacred text and prevent government intrusion in the practice thereof.

● (1145)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I understand that the members for Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford and Etobicoke Centre would both like unanimous consent to present a second petition.

Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

NIGERIA

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2009, Boko Haram, ISIS West Africa and armed Fulani militia have carried out sustained attacks against Christian communities in Nigeria, causing mass killings and widespread destruction of churches and villages. Despite the scale and duration of this violence, there have been no meaningful prosecutions, and international rights organizations report persistent failures by Nigerian authorities to prevent attacks or hold perpetrators accountable.

The petitioners are calling upon the government of Canada to recognize the targeted killings of Christians in Nigeria, hold those responsible accountable and work with international partners to protect Christian communities and support humanitarian aid, safe return of displaced persons and asylum for those fleeing persecution.

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition that has been signed by over 2,500 Canadians. The petition concerns ethical issues in public life, specifically the impact of disinformation and misinformation in political communications. The petitioners note concerns about the effects of disinformation on public trust and democratic debate, and they reference findings from Canadian security agencies identifying disinformation as a threat to democratic institutions.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons to consider measures to strengthen transparency, accountability, digital literacy and coordination across governments in responding to political disinformation.

* * *

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 at this time.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[For text of questions and responses, see Written Questions website]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 9

Hon. Rebecca Alty (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.) moved that a ways and means motion to introduce a bill entitled an act to give effect to the Final Self-Government Agreement for the Tlegohli Got'ine and to make consequential amendments to other acts be concurred in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): If a member participating in person wishes the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, we request that it be adopted on division.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

FINAL SELF-GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT FOR THE TLEGOHLI GOT'INE ACT

Hon. Rebecca Alty (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-27, an act to give effect

Government Orders

to the Final Self-Government Agreement for the Tlegohli Got'ine and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

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

* * *

STRENGTHENING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM AND BORDERS ACT

Hon. Rebecca Alty (for the Minister of Public Safety) moved:

That a message be sent to the Senate to acquaint Their Honours that, in relation to Bill C-12, An Act respecting certain measures relating to the security of Canada's borders and the integrity of the Canadian immigration system and respecting other related security measures, the House:

proposes that amendment 2 made by the Senate be amended by replacing the text of paragraph 75.1(3)(c) with the following: "the proportion of refugee protection claimants referred to in paragraph (b) who exited and re-entered Canada after the day of entry referred to in paragraph 101(1)(b.1) of that Act";

agrees with amendment 3 made by the Senate; and

respectfully disagrees with amendment 1 because the amendment would remove Canadian citizens and permanent residents from the clear and transparent information-sharing framework established by Part 5 of the bill, because information-sharing relating to these individuals already occurs under existing statutory authorities and would continue to occur in their absence from the framework established by Bill C-12, as the purpose of Part 5 is to replace the current patchwork of authorities with a single coherent regime that establishes consistent partners, clearly defined purposes, and modern privacy safeguards, and furthermore, because excluding Canadian citizens and permanent residents from these provisions would perpetuate existing inefficiencies, undermine modernization initiatives within the immigration system, and reduce the transparency and accountability that Bill C-12 intends to strengthen.

• (1150)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to have Bill C-12 back before us. It is an important piece of legislation.

Maybe the best way to start off is to talk about how, just under a year ago, we had an election. Canadians elected a new prime minister and a new government. Over 60, maybe even 70, new Liberal MPs were elected for the very first time. Through the election, the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party made a commitment to Canadians in different ways, on different platforms and issues. Two of those were to look at ways we could make our communities safer, and another was to be able to stabilize our immigration.

This is in essence what Bill C-12 does, but I would like to focus and split it into those two sections, if I may, in terms of what it is that I am going to say today. When I think of the Prime Minister's commitment to Canadians and what I campaigned on, which is making our communities safer, I can tell the House that every Liberal member of caucus understands the importance of making our communities safer. This is what we have seen here on the floor of the House is a suite of legislative initiatives that have been presented in order to support that election platform issue that the Prime Minister made to Canadians.

Government Orders

The Prime Minister also, for the very first time, appointed a Secretary of State for Combatting Crime, recognizing again just how important the issue of combatting crime is and having a minister ultimately responsible for facilitating legislation in its creation, doing a great deal of consulting with different stakeholders and ultimately supporting its passage through the House of Commons. I know this first-hand because I have watched her ask many questions here in the House of Commons on Parliament Hill. I have also had the opportunity to witness first-hand the consultation.

Some of that consultation was taking place when the Secretary of State for Combatting Crime came to visit the city of Winnipeg. We met at a local restaurant, where we talked about issues such as extortion and petty theft. We met with the police association, along with the chief of police of Winnipeg and some of his administrators, where they talked about the importance of some of the legislation that is being debated here in Ottawa. It was a very productive discussion that we had with the Secretary of State for Combatting Crime dealing with legislation.

The reason I say that is that I am sure there is a sense of disappointment with the minister. I know there is with me in regard to Bill C-2. We had to bring in Bill C-12 because the opposition party, the Conservative Party, stood in opposition to Bill C-2. The Conservatives made it very clear that they were not in any way going to be able to support the passage of Bill C-2, so Bill C-2 had to be broken up, and that is why we have Bill C-12 today.

Bill C-12 does not take into consideration everything that was in Bill C-2, but I want to emphasize the issue of lawful access, and I can tell the House that, within the Liberal caucus and the reflections of what the government members have been talking about, lawful access is absolutely essential, and law enforcement officers across the country are talking about the importance of lawful access. Even though it is not in Bill C-12, we had to carry it into another piece of legislation in an attempt to once again get that legislation passed.

● (1155)

I have seen members stand up and talk about the issue of extortion, for example. If they are genuinely concerned about extortion, how can they possibly not want to see lawful access pass the House? They will get another chance to do so.

I would put what Bill C-12 does in two different tiers. The first tier deals with the issue of strengthening Canada's borders, which is absolutely critical. The second tier deals with an immigration perspective that I would like to be able to share with the House in great detail.

Before I do that, I want to highlight a couple of the things in Bill C-12 with regard to securing Canada's borders that are really important for those who have followed the debate, whether it is here in the House or in the Senate chamber, to recognize. It would strengthen border security in a very real and tangible way. The bill would have an impact on things such as drug trafficking and the smuggling of weapons. Think about stolen vehicles that are exported out of Canada and the impact that has on our communities, particularly in the province of Ontario more recently.

Think about what the government has done in relation to border security, whether it is about those drugs, vehicles or other issues

dealing with smuggling and weapons, in particular. It is one thing to pass legislation. It is another to provide the supports. We have a Prime Minister, a Minister of Finance and, in fact, a government that has recognized the importance of providing the supports that are necessary, such as investments of well over \$1 billion to secure the Canada-U.S. borders and our coasts. There is a commitment from the Prime Minister for 1,000 new border control agents in one form or another.

Look back to the days when the leader of the Conservative Party was in government. The Conservatives talked about the importance of the border but they cut border control agents. They cut the budget going to the CBSA. That is one of the reasons why, with our new Prime Minister, we have invested not only in legislation to provide additional support, but also in budget dollars.

The legislation would enable a larger role for and enhance the role of our Canadian Coast Guard so that it could conduct security patrols, for example. When we talk about our Coast Guard services, what is really encouraging is how we are taking a more holistic approach. That is why we would see the Coast Guard now playing a larger role within DND.

The bill would enhance the RCMP's ability to share information. We often talk about registered sex offenders. The RCMP having the ability to access and share that sort of information in a limited way would be a very positive thing.

I want to get to one part of the legislation to provide a bit of history. This is the immigration portion. I understand that I have about four or five minutes to go, even though the temptation might be there to go longer, because I love talking about the issue of immigration. Immigration is an issue on which all of us should be working together to try to improve the situation.

● (1200)

The Prime Minister says we want to stabilize immigration. It is easy to be critical, but we have a Prime Minister and a government actually working to stabilize immigration. When the immigration critic was in government, the Conservative government back then made a commitment in 2014 to increase the number of international students and researchers to over 400,000. She might not recall that, but I do.

Looking at the situation we have today, we have to factor in what led us here. Whether it was the leader of the Conservative Party and the critic for immigration sitting around the cabinet table, saying, "Let us increase the numbers," or the pandemic, which caused all sorts of issues with visas actually being extended, there is a reason why we are in the situation we are in today. Now we have a Prime Minister and a Minister of Immigration who have made a commitment to stabilize it so that we can once again reinforce confidence in the system. This legislation is a part of that.

Government Orders

If a person has been living in Canada for a year, whether it is for study or a visit, is there a need to allow someone of that nature to be able to claim refugee status, which could bottleneck the system? I believe the short answer to that is no. The legislation addresses that issue. Why does it do that? It is very important that when we talk about the commitments that came out of the last election, we look at ways to do that.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver East.

I ask members opposite to recognize that Bill C-12 is good legislation. I am glad to see that it will likely be passing. I also want to encourage members opposite to take a look at Bill C-22, which is the lawful access bill. It is part of the suite of crime legislation the government has brought forward in order to make our communities safer. Lawful access is important.

I will leave my comments at that. I look forward to any questions.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I paid close attention to my colleague's speech. He said that the opposition is sometimes too critical of the government on immigration issues and that it should maybe make more of an effort to work across party lines on some issues.

Interestingly, Radio-Canada published an article in February that included a lot of criticism of the current Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. What was surprising was that the criticism came not just from the opposition; it was across party lines. It was unanimous. Several Liberal members were quoted in the article. They said there were huge problems with the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship's lack of familiarity with the portfolio.

I would like to know whether my colleague agrees with his own Liberal colleagues about the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

• (1205)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I disagree wholeheartedly with the article the member makes reference to and the character assassination we are getting from the opposition toward the Minister of Immigration. I do not believe they are being fair with regard to the situation Canada is in, because of a number of factors.

Last year, we had an election. We now have a Prime Minister who has made a commitment to Canadians to stabilize immigration and a minister who is implementing that stabilization. Quite frankly, it has been very successful. She has done a fantastic job at stabilizing it and bringing more order.

Saying it was the former government, if members want to be fair—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): We have to go on to the next question.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have say to the member opposite that I am disappointed that, with all the significant changes on immigration, the immigration minister is not the one giving the speech. However, the parliamentary secretary is known for being here most of the day and for always giving a speech, so that is that.

There are so many issues with immigration in the country. We have heard especially about the issue of the 150,000 fraud cases that were not properly identified and a lot of excesses, such as the three million people who are supposed to leave and have no plans to leave.

Can the member expound on what the government is doing to address the concerns that have been raised?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the government has been aggressively pursuing this, making sure that we stabilize the immigration file, and it is having success.

The member is trying to give the impression that this might be the first time this has happened, but she should look back to when she and her colleague, the immigration critic, were in the Conservative government caucus. Do members remember some of the issues they created? They deleted literally hundreds of thousands of files that were being processed overseas. They told people they did not care about their moms and dads. They would not be able to sponsor them because the Conservatives were stopping the program. There were delays for married people so that it took three, four and five years for people to be able to sponsor a spouse.

If the member wants to talk about immigration disasters and compare them, I will be more than open to doing that if I am given leave at the appropriate time.

I can tell members that we have a Prime Minister who is committed to stabilizing immigration, and we will do just that.

[*Translation*]

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised that my colleagues opposite would ask such questions and level such criticisms given that the Minister of Immigration recently made significant updates.

I would like to invite my colleague to once again explain to my colleagues opposite that we have made a lot of major changes with respect to immigration. We have reduced the number of immigrants because we want things to be even across the country.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing today is a reflection of the need because of issues that stem back to 2014.

Government Orders

The biggest change we have seen is an adjustment in the total number of immigrants coming into Canada. At the same time, we are looking at ways we can facilitate a reduction in the extension of temporary visas for people who are here and do not have provincial support. For example, if someone in the province of Manitoba has a visa that is going to expire, they are going to have to leave Canada.

We need to bring the numbers down, and we are doing just that.

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the outset of the member's speech, right at the beginning, he said this is an important piece of legislation. I could not agree more. All legislation that comes before the House is important. This particular piece touches on immigration, the IRCC, the IRB and the CBSA. There are all of those issues.

The member referred to 2014. He has conveniently and completely avoided saying the name Trudeau in this House. I do not think he has mentioned it once since the 45th Parliament started. We all know what has happened to the immigration system over the last 11 years. The Liberals have completely destroyed it.

This is an important piece of legislation. I wonder why the minister is hiding behind the member and not standing in her place, if it is such an important piece of legislation to the department, to speak to it in the House and defend it. Instead, she has asked the parliamentary secretary to the House leader to speak to it.

• (1210)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, both the Minister of Immigration and the Secretary of State for Combatting Crime have both played a very important role in the creation of the legislation and they have contributed immensely, whether in caucus, on the floor of the House or in communities by meeting and working with the different stakeholders out there.

This is good, sound legislation. It could have been better if it had been incorporated into Bill C-2, but the Conservatives refused to pass Bill C-2 because it had lawful access and they do not support lawful access. As a result, we now have Bill C-12.

I am here, not only providing my personal—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): We have to go on to the next question.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I am quite surprised that my colleagues are saying they are astonished by the criticism of the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. My colleagues would not be so surprised if they had read and watched Radio-Canada's reporting. This time, Radio-Canada went to the trouble of publishing the same report in English as well so that my colleagues from the rest of Canada could view it. They are not used to reading Radio-Canada's French-language website.

Liberal members are the ones complaining about the minister's work on this file, so my colleagues should stop saying that the opposition members are the only ones criticizing her. The article includes dozens of comments from Liberal members.

What does my colleague think of his Liberal colleagues' comments about the minister?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe the criticism is justified to this degree, wherein Bloc members are calling for resignations and so forth. We have a very competent and able minister who has been able to deliver on what the Prime Minister said in the election platform in terms of stabilizing immigration. She is doing just that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Before we go to resuming debate, I am going to do a bit of procedural housekeeping and ask for unanimous consent for the member to split his time with the hon. member for Vancouver East.

Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank members of the House for their grace in allowing me to speak to this important bill today.

I rise today with ongoing and deep concerns about Bill C-12. Behind the language of “efficiency”, “integrity” and “streamlining”, the bill would do something very real and very harmful. It would take rights away from people who are seeking protection, handing more unchecked power to the government and scapegoating newcomers. The intention in the logic behind this legislation is not just flawed, it is dangerous. That is why New Democrats cannot support Bill C-12.

Let us begin with the refugee system. Canada has long prided itself on offering people a fair hearing and an opportunity to present their case before an independent decision-maker. However, Bill C-12 would weaken that foundation. Under this legislation, people would be found ineligible for a full hearing before the Immigration and Refugee Board, not because their case lacked merit but because of some arbitrary timeline. Instead, they would be pushed into a pre-removal risk assessment process. The government says that it is fine, but the process would deprive individuals of the opportunity for their case to be heard by an independent tribunal. Under the pre-removal risk assessment process, decisions are made by an immigration officer. There is no meaningful right to appeal.

Government Orders

Due process is not a luxury. It is a fundamental principle of justice, and the bill would erode that. This is not a concern just raised by me in the House. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has already sounded the alarm bell. It has warned that Bill C-12's new ineligibility provisions would deny refugee claimants adequate procedural safeguards, and it has called on Canada to ensure access to fair and efficient procedures in line with our international obligations, including the principle of non-refoulement. Civil society organizations, including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, have said the same.

There is no evidence that the legitimacy of a refugee claim is linked to how quickly someone files it. The introduction of a one-year bar is particularly troubling. Refugee claimants are expected to navigate a complex legal system, often without legal advice, often in situations of trauma. Under this legislation, they would be told that if they do not act within an arbitrary timeline, they will lose access to a full hearing. This is not fairness. This is exclusion, and this is procedural duress. Frankly, this is a system stacked against the claimant.

Who would this actually affect? It could affect a child who once visited Canada with their family, a human rights advocate who came to Canada to speak about conditions in their home country or a survivor of gender-based violence who needed time to process trauma before coming forward. All could be captured by these sweeping exclusions, and it gets worse. These provisions are retroactive. They would apply to people who entered Canada years ago, going back to 2020, who had no way of knowing these rules would one day be used against them. It undermines the very principle of legal certainty.

However, that is not all. Bill C-12 would also grant sweeping powers to the government to cancel immigration documents, potentially affecting an entire group of people. Under the broad and undefined concept of public interest, legislation needs to be precise. It must include clear limits and safeguards, but the bill does not do so. Instead, it would open the door to decisions being made without transparency, without independent oversight and without adequate recourse. This should concern all of us, because when power is concentrated without accountability, mistakes are not just possible, they are inevitable.

We do not have to look far to understand the risks. Canada has a history, one we must acknowledge, of making decisions in moments of fear that disproportionately harm marginalized communities. We have seen exclusion justified; we have seen rights denied, and in hindsight, we have recognized those decisions as wrong. The question before us is simple: Have we learned from that history or are we just repeating it, but this time under different language?

Another serious concern is the expansion of information sharing. The government argues that this is to improve coordination, but coordination must not come at the expense of rights. Under this framework, personal information, status, identity and immigration history can be shared more broadly across government systems. While the government says that safeguards will exist, many of these arrangements would depend on agreements that are not transparent.

• (1215)

This creates real risks, because migrants rely on public services, health care, housing and legal supports. If there is even the perception that accessing these services could expose their immigration status, people will hesitate. They will delay seeking care. They will avoid reporting exploitation. They will withdraw. That has consequences, not just for those individuals but for our communities. Public systems work best when people can access them safely and without fear. This bill risks undermining that.

The Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, after studying the bill, called for the draconian measures in part 5 to part 8 of the bill to be deleted. The Senate wanted amendments to restore some balance so that measures to block refugee hearings; the arbitrary, retroactive one-year bar; the breach of privacy to share information about applicants; and cabinet's ability to cancel or suspend documents en masse under vaguely defined public interest terms are done away with.

Unfortunately, these amendments were voted down by the Senate committee on public safety. In the end, the Senate passed amendments to limit the sharing of personal information from citizens and permanent residents and to make mandatory annual reports on asylum claim processing times, ineligibility data and statistics on post-one-year asylum claims. Even though the amendments from the Senate are significantly pared down from their original form, the Liberals want to reject the Senate amendments to respect the privacy rights of citizens and permanent residents.

The Liberals have introduced this at a time when migrants are increasingly being blamed for broader social challenges. We hear claims that migrants are responsible for housing shortages, for pressures on health care and for affordability challenges. I will be very clear: Migrants do not create these crises. These are the result of policy decisions about housing supply, public investment and economic priorities. Blaming migrants does not solve these problems. It distracts from them, and legislation like Bill C-12 risks reinforcing that narrative.

The bill is an attack on people who are already vulnerable, such as refugees fleeing violence, migrant workers facing exploitation and families trying to build a life in Canada. These individuals are not statistics. They are members of our communities; they contribute, they work, and they care for others. They deserve a system that treats them with dignity and fairness.

Government Orders

The consequences extend beyond individuals. Denying refugee claimants due process puts people at risk of persecution, torture or worse. It also damages Canada's credibility on the world stage. The same UN Human Rights Committee has raised broader concerns about the state of civil liberties in this country, from surveillance to systemic discrimination and barriers faced by marginalized communities.

New Democrats believe there is a better way. We can build an immigration and refugee system that is both fair and efficient, that processes claims in a timely manner, that ensures access to legal supports, that upholds due process and that recognizes the humanity of those seeking protection. These are not competing goals. They are complementary.

We must uphold the principles of fairness, accountability, human rights and due process. The legislation does not meet this standard. For those reasons, my colleagues in the NDP and I will oppose the Liberal motion and will also be opposing Bill C-12.

• (1220)

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are many other countries, such as in Europe, the U.K. and the United States, that limit asylum claims to a one-year time period. I think some of the member's speech generalized and said that Canada would no longer give due process to asylum claimants. That is untrue.

People who enter the country and wish to claim asylum would have an ample, one-year time period to put their claim in if their life is at risk. If they miss that time period and fall upon removal at some point in the future, they would also have the option of filing for a pre-removal risk assessment so that they are not removed into any risky situations.

Is that not true?

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, it is funny that the member cited the United States because, believe it or not, the United States actually has a slightly better system, although not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. Its one-year bar actually applies to the last date of entry. Canada has chosen to apply it retroactively. This is what the government is doing. It is racing to the bottom instead of respecting international law and basic human rights.

On the issue around the pre-removal risk assessment, in my speech, I amply outlined the flaws within that system. The government is now depriving individuals who are not able to meet the arbitrary timeline. People who face trauma, who escape persecution, may not have the wherewithal to file the claim within one year for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is a lack of access to legal supports.

The member seems to think this is okay. The New Democrats take a different point of view. We do not think it is okay. We think that this is a draconian piece of legislation and it should be withdrawn.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I understand my colleague's opposition to Bill C-12. However, we think it is a balanced approach that is not

without risks, but that addresses our legitimate concerns about the integrity of the process. In particular, the government wants to add a rule that would require asylum seekers to be on Canadian soil to have their case heard.

What does my colleague have against that specific provision?

[*English*]

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure which clause the member is talking about. If he is referring to the one-year bar issue, I have already cited the issues related to it.

There are many other components within the bill that I and the New Democrats cannot stand behind, and we are not alone. The UN Committee has made comments about the bill and its measures that should be changed. Civil societies have raised these issues. Those who work with refugees and migrants have continually raised these issues. I wish that the members of Parliament would listen to them and to the stories of real people.

Canada once upon a time had a great system, but it is being eroded bit by bit by the Liberal government and the Conservatives on an ongoing basis. Now it is a shadow of what it was. The immigration system has problems and needs to be fixed, but not this way.

• (1225)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked a question earlier pointing out that with all the other problems in the immigration system, including 150,000 frauds, three million people who are supposed to exit the country but are here, and 33,000 criminals whom the government cannot find, the government should put its priorities somewhere else.

I think the member may have something to contribute to that comment.

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, yes, the Auditor General has come out with a report that highlights the government's inability to ensure that the immigration system is operating efficiently and fairly.

There is no question that there are people who take advantage of international students, who are faced with exploitation and abuse, but the government has turned a blind eye to that. Instead of fixing the problem, it is blaming international students and coming in with a cap, as though somehow the victims are to be blamed. That is the false narrative the government is perpetuating in the broader public. It is, frankly, dangerous.

* * *

COMMITTEE TRAVEL

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

Government Orders

That, in relation to its study of the forestry industry, three members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources be authorized to travel to Helsinki, Finland; Lahti, Finland; Stockholm, Sweden; and Norrköping, Sweden, in the spring of 2026, during an adjournment period, and that the necessary staff accompany the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): All those opposed to the member's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

STRENGTHENING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM AND BORDERS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we are debating amendments that the other place has proposed to Bill C-12, as well as the government's response to those amendments. I would like to use this opportunity to offer a word of caution to the government regarding developments that have occurred since the immigration measures in Bill C-12 were last debated here, as well as to suggest constructive remedies to restore parliamentary supremacy and repair the significant damage to Canada's immigration system that has been levelled by the Liberal government and, indeed, under the tenure of the Liberal Prime Minister.

Since Bill C-12 was last debated in this place, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that unapproved asylum claimants in Quebec have a constitutional right to provincially funded, low-cost day care spaces. The broader potential impacts of this ruling should set off alarm bells in every province, across the federal government and to every member of the House. They certainly did for His Majesty's loyal opposition.

Therefore, Conservatives affirm Quebec's right to pursue the use of section 33 of the charter in relation to Quebec v. Kanyinda in that ruling, should its government choose to do so. We also call upon the Prime Minister to direct his government to immediately review what impact the Kanyinda ruling may have on Canada's federal immigration and social welfare programs and to outline what actions may have to be taken in order to wrest power over immigration back from the big immigration lobby, as well as from overzealous judiciaries, and put it back into the hands of the Canadian people.

Liberals must also commit to vigorously challenging any Kanyinda-related litigation that may impact federal jurisdiction in the meantime, including what is included in the immigration provisions of Bill C-12. Here is why. Canada's asylum system should offer compassionate refuge to truly vulnerable persons in numbers that we can sustainably support, but Canadians believe that the asylum system should not be used as a back door by which migrants can quickly and easily end-run normal immigration selection processes. Today, data overwhelmingly shows that the asylum system skews heavily toward the latter, while the prioritization of benefits to those who most urgently need them falls under the former.

It is the provinces that have largely been left to cover the costs of this failure of the federal Liberal government. Since the years-long Roxham Road illegal border crossing debacle began, Quebec has experienced a massive spike in asylum seekers in recent years, many with unverified claims, and now hosts somewhere in the neighbourhood of 200,000. This influx, combined with the Liberals' years-long delays in processing asylum claims, which still exist under the Liberal Prime Minister, have strained Quebec's social services, including subsidized day cares.

With many Quebec families already facing years-long waits for day care spots, and with an unplanned increase in demand enabled by a dysfunctional federal asylum processing system, it is reasonable and, frankly, should be expected that Quebec would enact changes to its welfare system to ensure sustainability. Therefore, in this specific instance, Quebec should not be met with the typical reactionary pearl clutching should it follow through with suggestions among its political parties that it may invoke the notwithstanding clause in the case of Kanyinda.

However, the impact of the Kanyinda ruling has the potential to extend far beyond Quebec. Justice Suzanne Côté dissented from the majority opinion, saying that some of its findings had the potential to "unduly impede the state's ability to act" in the public interest by limiting the range of policy choices available to governments in designing and administering social benefits programs. She concluded that refugee claimant status should not be recognized as what are called "analogous grounds" under section 15 of the charter to guarantee charter rights. In this she is right, but in the ruling, Chief Justice Wagner took the opposite position, suggesting that the charter should include asylum claimants as a protected identity group.

Given the breadth of the ruling and what amounts to Wagner's issuing an open invitation to the activist legal community to test the waters further, it is not hard to imagine many well-paid anti-reform lawyers salivating at the prospect of doing just that, nor is it a stretch that the justice's arguments for intersectionality that the judges made in the Kanyinda case could be used as a test on whether unvetted and unapproved asylum claimants, particularly those without work permits, should be entitled to other taxpayer-funded benefits.

Government Orders

● (1230)

These tests could include the legality of proposed copays that the government has put forward on the interim federal health benefit program, which of course is a program that has risen in cost by over 1,200% since 2015 and includes luxury health care benefits that many Canadians do not receive. The case and the ruling could also be used to test unfettered access to the Canada child benefit as well as old age security.

Chief Justice Wagner's concurrence regarding recognizing refugee claimant status as an analogous ground under section 15 of the charter could also provide a hook for broader arguments against aspects of the criteria-based immigration streams. That is a huge problem, so clarity is also needed about the extent to which the Kanyinda framework could be used to legally undermine specific rules within immigration processing streams that use neutral selection criteria such as age caps, language thresholds and education points.

Under Kanyinda, any of these criteria, the cornerstones of Canada's immigration selection process, could potentially be argued to have discriminatory impacts on protected or analogous grounds and, if subsequently overturned, further undermine Parliament and the government's ability to set and enforce immigration rules. That is crazy.

While some may argue that these scenarios are unlikely, history suggests the anti-immigration reform lobby, a.k.a. big immigration, will ensure otherwise. Canada's immigration lobby is arguably one of its most powerful. While there is undoubtedly a need for vulnerable non-citizens to have their rights advocated for, a major obstacle to enacting reasonable reforms to Canada's immigration and asylum systems has always been fierce resistance from a network of well-funded anti-reform lawyers, immigration consultants, lobbyists and non-governmental organizations profiting from Canada's overly permissive and enforcement-deficient immigration system.

Big immigration rarely if ever acknowledges that in order to achieve social consensus for immigration, the system cannot be left in its current state of abject dysfunction. Big immigration's voices dominate immigration-related news stories and submissions to parliamentary committees. A simple check of the lobbying registry proves that big immigration has disproportionate levels of access to senior immigration policy-makers, and many individuals from this clique have gone on to occupy influential roles on the Immigration and Refugee Board or in the courts, which further dooms reform efforts.

On that note, a former Liberal immigration minister, who bent to the will of big immigration to such an extent that he allowed nearly a million foreign students on work permits into the country in a two-year period, is now Canada's justice minister. The sheer volume of big immigration intervenors allowed in the Kanyinda case also illustrates this profound imbalance.

However, given the hull-buckling groans emanating from most Canadian social welfare programs, the deep deficits most Canadian governments are running and the disarray that Canada's immigration system is already in, the Prime Minister has a duty to prevent ideologically homogenous activists from using the Kanyinda

framework to block reasonable reforms or to make the system even more dysfunctional than it already is.

There are many other reasons to prevent further blurring of the distinction between citizen and non-citizen using the Kanyinda framework. It will be virtually impossible for any level of government to disincentivize the abuse of the asylum system if there are endless legal options for unverified claimants or outright fraudsters to access social services they were never intended to receive.

Blurred boundaries on who is eligible to receive benefits will, beyond the obvious sustainability problems, make it even harder to prioritize those truly vulnerable groups and, frankly, also to maintain consensus for immigration, which is already rightly in the toilet in the country because of the lack of trust in the government's ability to manage the immigration system in a fair and orderly manner.

For many members of the public, this lack of distinction will be perceived as a lack of fairness. In return, there will be even less public appetite to extend benefits or welcome to truly vulnerable refugees, or for immigration writ large. Further legal erosion of the difference between citizen and non-citizen will only serve to continue to diminish the value of Canadian citizenship, which has been incredibly diminished under the Liberal government, and to accelerate the fragmentation of our already diffuse national identity.

● (1235)

Perhaps most importantly, the Kanyinda ruling adds a thick layer of judicial overreach to an existing spread of rulings that have already seriously eroded both parliamentary supremacy in setting immigration law and the federal government's ability to enforce it. Changes in 2012, which prevented non-citizens who made fraudulent asylum claims from receiving taxpayer-funded supplemental health benefits like vision care while awaiting removal from the country, were almost immediately struck down by the federal court. This led to the now frequent practice of judges' giving more lenient sentences to non-citizens convicted of serious crimes in order to avoid consequences for their immigration status.

Government Orders

Parliamentary committee testimony during the review of the immigration provisions of the current Bill C-12 suggests that its reforms would immediately be challenged in court, including the ones that we are debating today, by the big immigration lobby. They said this to us in our committees. Justice Wagner's tone, in his opinion in *Kanyinda*, suggests that this lobby will be successful should they choose to challenge the immigration provisions outlined in Bill C-12, so the government's talking points that this bill is going to remedy any problems are likely false.

Allowing this trend to go unchecked by the federal government will only further ingrain the Canadian public's sense that there is an overall loss of control in the immigration system and, in turn, further erode the consensus for Canada's immigration system, which we know is already in the abject depths of despair. It will also suggest that the federal Liberals' willingness to prevent asylum system abuse only goes as far as the court's willingness to accept the reforms.

However, at present, Canadian immigration law and public support for immigration is predicated on the principle that it must be fair, legal and necessary to treat non-citizens differently from citizens for the purpose of immigration selection and entry into the country. That is a no-brainer. It is the fundamental principle of our immigration system. In fact, colleagues, this concept is reinforced by Subsection 91(25) of the Constitution Act of 1867, which gives Canada's Parliament the main power to set immigration laws. We are supreme, and it should be our will in this place, not that of the courts, to set the processes by which non-citizens enter and stay in the country. The public expects that they can turn to and rely on the federal government and Parliament to both support a strong Canadian national identity and maintain a fair and orderly immigration system while securing our nation's borders.

However, the *Kanyinda* framework shows that Canada's Supreme Court is willing to fixate on the increasingly tone-deaf voices of the big immigration lobby and directly challenge these foundational principles, which were the only thing that through the decades allowed the consensus for immigration to exist in our country. Those foundational principles are being actively eroded. The charter has a built-in fail-safe for extreme potential situations such as these, and the government and Parliament have other tools at their disposal to rein in an overzealous judiciary. It is now up to the Prime Minister to provide clarity on how much more judicially inspired immigration dysfunction his government will tolerate before he directs it to act. Let us pray that his patience has boundaries and that the judiciary and big immigration do not further test the limits. While hope springs eternal on this front, data proves otherwise.

Under the Liberal Prime Minister, over the last year, the asylum claim backlog has grown to nearly over 300,000 people. That backlog in 2015 was 10,000 people. Colleagues should think about that and think about the size of the backlog. These are just people currently in the queue, not people who have been processed. This is a years-long backlog, with a similar size to a sizable city. Three hundred thousand people is a lot. Eighty per cent of the refugee claims since 2019 have been approved with zero screenings. To this day, we have been trying to get the government to change course. For countries like Iran, there is a system called the file system in which

the government virtually has no oversight. It is basically a rubber stamp for asylum claims.

There are some other things too. The Liberals, in the last few days, have come under extreme fire. Again, colleagues do not have to take my word for it. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation said that this was the most scathing report that has been issued by the Auditor General in recent memory.

● (1240)

The Auditor General issued a report that showed over 150,000 cases of student permit fraud; the government had only followed up on a minuscule fraction of those cases. Then, of that tiny fraction, many of those cases, which were obviously fraudulent, went on to get permit extensions; worse, to get permanent residency; or, as we are talking about today, to make asylum claims. This is not a system that is in control. This is a system that is wildly, dumpster fire, out of control. Now we have a situation in which the Supreme Court has invited the big immigration lobby to invite further dysfunction into the system.

To colleagues across party lines, I say that this is not fair to anybody. It is not fair to non-citizens who are making applications to enter the country through normal immigration processing streams and who are basically being put into "no-hope" queues of ever coming into this country, because the wait times are so long. Why? The Liberals have allowed many backdoor immigration streams to happen, whether in the illegal border crossings at Roxham Road that led to a massive spike of crossings in Quebec or in the fact that we now have a multitude of student permits that were issued under the justice minister. This was a very bad period of Canadian history. Now that those permits are expiring, people either are not leaving or they are making fraudulent asylum claims.

I would like to know from the government what happens now. I guarantee this was asked in committee. When the big immigration lobby challenges the provisions that are in this bill, what happens? I can tell the House what is going to happen: Nothing is going to change, and the system is going to get worse.

It is incumbent upon the Liberal Prime Minister to tell Parliament how he intends to deal with the *Kanyinda* framework. The government needs to undertake a review of all of Canada's immigration laws to see what could be legitimately challenged and then tell Parliament what it intends to do to prevent that from happening.

Government Orders

Essentially what we have here, with what we have seen between the Auditor General report, the Kanyinda ruling and the out-of-control asylum claim crisis, is an open border system in Canada. There really is no functional immigration system, between the lack of ability to screen people coming in and make determinations on who can come in under what processes and then to remove people who do not have a legal right to be here, including those who have undertaken serious criminal activities like sexual assault. The Liberal government has basically erased Canadian borders. Not only is the immigration system not functioning right now; for all intents and purposes, it does not exist.

With that, what happens? We have a housing crisis. We have a 14% youth unemployment rate. We have a massive strain on Canada's health care systems and other social welfare payments. Also, as for the thing that everybody here has talked about for decades, the fact that Canada is an open and welcoming country, it is borne out in polling that many Canadians do not feel that way anymore. It is not me saying this. This is the fault of a lack of ability to manage a fair and orderly process. It is a lack of ability for the government to say to the activist judiciary that Parliament is supreme and we have the right to set immigration processes.

Day after day, we just hear false numbers from the Liberal government, more platitudes, failed immigration. I think the Liberals have gone through eight immigration ministers in 10 years. The Liberals treat the immigration ministry like the armpit of cabinet, when in fact it is a set of policies foundational to the functioning of both our economic and social fabric, as well as to our national identity.

In closing, I just want to speak to Canadian youth, many of whom cannot find a job right now. I will refer to a memo that one of the government departments had. It said that these out-of-control immigration levels, and the lack of process and fairness, led to a huge increase in the youth jobs crisis. This needs to be fixed.

Conservatives have proposed dozens of concrete policies to fix this. Unfortunately, the Liberals have voted against them. However, I am encouraged because other political parties have supported Conservatives across party lines to restore order and fairness.

• (1245)

With that, I would urge the government to seriously look at the Kanyinda ruling and how it is going to affect the provisions in Bill C-12 and other potential immigration streams and come back to Parliament with a plan so that we can tell Canadians with some measure of confidence that fairness and order may be restored.

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, control in our immigration system is very important. I agree with that. This is why the government has been taking several different measures. The Auditor General's report just came out recently. It recognizes gaps in the system. However, those are gaps that were recognized by our government, hence the introduction of Bill C-12, which was originally in Bill C-2 and tabled back in June 2025. However, the Conservatives cause a lot of delay on the bills that we have been putting forward to crack down on crime and to bring control back into our immigration system.

We are standing here months and months later, in agreement with a lot of parts, but what we have done is delay the implementation. What the bill does is with regard to information sharing. As for some of what the member has brought up, in terms of people putting fake documentation into applications and then not being caught in other streams, this would fix that problem. The bill would allow different streams to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, that is all a load of bunk for two reasons. Number one, God forgive them, yesterday the Liberals voted against a bill that would have stopped the process by which judges give lenient sentences to non-citizens convicted of serious crimes so that they can stay in Canada. That is an abject failure and a disgusting erosion of the democratic principles and foundation on which our entire country is based. If non-citizens who are guests in our country are getting lighter sentences than citizens so that they can stay here and skirt deportation provisions, I ask for forgiveness on the part of the victims. The Liberals should never have done that. It is just disgusting.

Number two, the minister missed the entire point of my speech. Of course they did. In our committees, we have seen that big immigration is going to challenge these rulings. They need to say how they are going to respond to it.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, whom I hold in high regard, for her remarks. She took the time to clearly explain the Kanyinda decision, a recent Supreme Court ruling. There has been debate in Quebec following this ruling as to whether Quebec will invoke the notwithstanding clause to opt out of it. This is a debate that will take place in Quebec, and it will be up to Quebecers to decide.

Various arguments are being put forward, and I would like my colleague to elaborate on the following point. There are currently 190,000 asylum seekers in Quebec. Of that number, 127,000 have work permits and are therefore working. When a mother who is an asylum seeker has a work permit and can work, she naturally pays taxes. Her child attends a day care where they learn French. Since 80% of applications are ultimately approved, this promotes the integration not only of the person who will be admitted as a refugee, but also of the child.

What is my colleague's response to this argument?

• (1250)

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, it is important to understand this: The Liberals allowed unfettered numbers of bogus asylum claims to happen across the country, it placed a burden on provincial governments without any sort of consultation, particularly in health care and other social welfare programs across the board.

Therefore, it is reasonable for provinces to put restrictions and limitations on social services. There is not unlimited money. Resources have to be prioritized. In this instance, this is why Conservatives affirm that, should the Government of Quebec choose to do so, it is right, in this case specifically, to use the notwithstanding clause.

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's excellent speech highlights many issues and many problems we have seen and continue to see in our immigration system in Canada. In fact, as the House very well knows and Canadians know, for the past 11 years there has been a systematic decline in how we manage the immigration file. More importantly, perhaps, I want to thank the member for the tremendous work she has done in the House, in the Parliament and in previous Parliaments, focusing on these issues and bringing concrete solutions to the Liberal government, to hopefully get it to listen, which it has not done yet. Today, we have two former ministers of immigration and one current Minister of Immigration. They are not standing in their place to speak.

Why is the Minister of Immigration, today, not standing to speak to what she deems to be an important piece of legislation?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, all I know is that when I was a cabinet minister, if former prime minister Stephen Harper found out that we were not shepherding our legislation through the House, there would be major heck to pay. This is because the principle of parliamentary supremacy is this: We are here to debate legislation and hold the government to account, and when government members are presenting legislation, they have an onus. The ministers, the executive branch of government, have an onus to convince all of us that it is in the best interest of the country. What we are witnessing here is the executive branch of government willingly thumbing its nose at the parliamentary branch, not just by its lack of willingness to stand and debate its own legislation and offload it to whatever, but also through its lack of willingness to challenge judicial overreach. Yesterday in committee, my colleague and I watched the Liberals try to put a court order or a court review on a parliamentary motion. What kind of bunk is that? This is our House.

[Translation]

Jacques Ramsay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my hon. colleague from Calgary Nose Hill, this is a typical anti-immigration rant from the Conservative Party.

What is this argument based on? Essentially, it is based on the ruling in Quebec (Attorney General) v. Kanyinda, a decision that is not fundamentally about immigration. It is a decision that upholds gender equality and the protection of the most vulnerable. My colleague may see it differently and that is her prerogative, but this decision is not primarily about immigration.

Our colleague used the words “we are supreme”. Can we remind her that neither the Supreme Court nor the House of Commons is supreme? The Constitution of Canada is supreme. This decision is based on the Constitution.

Is our hon. colleague for or against the Constitution of Canada?

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, yes, the Constitution Act actually says under section 95 that Parliament has the right to set immigration law, number one. Number two, the Kanyinda ruling is inherently about immigration. It is actually kind of hilarious that the member would say it was not. It ruled that asylum seekers, a class of immigrants, have the constitutional right to a social welfare program, which the province had put limits on. This is a direct incursion on provincial jurisdiction. The Liberals' misunderstanding of the program is what is leading to this mass immigration, open border policy that is eroding Canada's national identity and our social and economic fabric. The intervention my colleague made there was indicative of the entire government's ignorance on this file and its lack of willingness to treat it seriously. A Conservative government would restore order and fairness to this file.

• (1255)

[Translation]

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke at length about constitutional limits and about the fact that, in today's Canada, some sections of the Constitution would prevent the full integration of the Conservative ideology.

Members of the Bloc Québécois are separatists. We would like Quebec to become a country so that we can set our own standards. In our opinion, the Constitution of Canada sets limits that prevent us, as French-speaking Quebecers, from protecting our identity and culture and from implementing public policies that truly reflect our priorities. We know that constitutions can be changed. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Is the Conservative Party proposing to reopen constitutional negotiations to reform the Constitution?

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I think we could agree to start with enforcing the current provisions of the Constitution, such as section 91(25), which gives Parliament supremacy and the right to set immigration laws. It is not the court's job to do that. We have to start pushing back on an activist judiciary and big immigration, the largest and most destructive lobby in the country. We need to restore order and fairness to Canada's immigration system. We need to uphold the rule of law and democratic principles, such as just abiding by the law for non-citizens and citizens alike, addressing catch-and-release bail, and I could go on and on. We have to restore the adherence to and use of the principles that are already in there to show that the people we represent, the people with the true power, are in control, and that the system is not out of control as it is under this Liberal dumpster fire.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-12, an act respecting certain measures relating to the security of Canada's borders and the integrity of the Canadian immigration system and respecting other related security measures, at third reading. As the critic for immigration, refugees and citizenship, I will explain why we support this legislation, particularly in terms of what it does for our immigration system.

First, let us review the situation. The number of temporary residents has increased significantly in recent years under this Liberal government. In 2018, temporary residents accounted for 3.3% of the Canadian population. By 2024, that figure had risen to 7.5%, which is more than double. Since Bill C-12 focuses primarily on asylum seekers, let us look at the situation from that perspective. In 2015, Quebec received 3,000 asylum claims. In 2020, that number had tripled to nearly 10,000. In 2024, it was 10 times higher than in 2015, at 35,000. That means that, in 10 years, the number of asylum claims jumped from 3,000 to 30,000.

Asylum claims have dropped somewhat since 2025, but 190,000 asylum seekers in Quebec are still waiting for a final decision. The backlog across Canada is close to 300,000. The increase in asylum claimants has created enormous challenges for the integrity of the process. What is the best way to ensure that only refugees within the meaning of the Geneva Convention are accepted and that claims are processed at a reasonable pace? Is there a way to detect fraudulent claims?

Recently, we learned that the Immigration and Refugee Board, or IRB, was skipping in-person hearings to speed up processing. There had been a significant increase in application volumes, and the IRB was under pressure to move faster. It therefore decided to just skip the hearings and approve the asylum claims.

Some 35,000 asylum seekers have had their claims accepted in that manner since 2019. In 2025, 15% of all claims were accepted without a hearing to test credibility. When the IRB chairperson appeared before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, she acknowledged that holding hearings enhances the integrity of the process because hearings allow the IRB member to verify the evidence submitted as part of the claim.

The mechanism put in place by the IRB raises concerns about the integrity of the process. A list was drawn up of countries from which claims are often accepted because there are legitimate fears of persecution, and the decision was made to fast-track them on paper. Here is the issue. According to the C.D. Howe Institute, the information has spread and criminal groups in these countries may have been able to use it as a fast track to obtaining refugee status in order to be able to enter Canada. That is one recent issue.

Here is a second recent issue. On Monday, the Auditor General of Canada tabled a report on international students. Once again, we see that there are concerns about the integrity of the process. The Auditor General said that 153,000 reports relating to study permits had been sent to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada by Canadian educational institutions. The reports indicated that the students who held those study permits might have failed to comply with the conditions.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada flagged 153,000 cases in 2023 and 2024, but only 4,000 of them were investigated. This shows just how fragile our immigration system really is. Investigations were launched for each of these 4,000 cases, but 40% of them were dropped because the applicant or person with the study permit failed to respond. These investigators were not exactly over-zealous. All the person had to do was not respond and the investigators left them alone. That is no way to protect the integrity of the process or the public's trust in it.

● (1300)

The Auditor General also told us that there are 800 cases. This is noteworthy because even though the Auditor General used random sampling, she was able to identify 800 cases that were reported to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada not as potentially problematic, but as problematic. Some 800 study permits were shown to have been issued based on fraudulent documents or inaccurate information. There are cases where people obtained study permits by claiming that they wanted to enrol in a Canadian university with a diploma that they had earned from a college that does not exist or from a college known to be a diploma mill. How did IRCC respond to these 800 fraudulent cases? It did nothing, even though it had the discretion to take action to ensure the integrity of the process. Public confidence in our immigration system is eroding, and the IRCC still made the decision to do nothing. It decided to do nothing about those 800 cases.

Our immigration system is having difficulty adapting. That is what is going on. The government failed to adapt the system to a reality that has changed dramatically over the past 10 years. There has been a sharp increase in applications, so the process needed to be improved, especially in terms of processing times but also in terms of integrity. I gave two examples earlier that demonstrate the system's inability to adapt, namely, claimants who were accepted without a hearing and international students who obtained their permits fraudulently and who have not been dealt with. This undermines the integrity of our immigration system, and that is why we support Bill C-12. We think that this bill provides some useful ways to strengthen our immigration system, particularly when it comes to asylum seekers.

What does Bill C-12 do in terms of immigration? First, there is part 5, which facilitates information sharing. That should enable various bodies to exchange information when fraudulent schemes are uncovered so that action can be taken.

Government Orders

Part 6 gives the minister more control over asylum seekers. That is not without risk, but the government thinks it has to be done. For one thing, the minister will be authorized to “specify the information and documents that are required in support of a claim for refugee protection”. The government will “authorize the Refugee Protection Division of the Immigration and Refugee Board to determine that claims for refugee protection...have been abandoned in certain circumstances”. The minister will be provided with “the power to determine that claims for refugee protection that have not yet been referred...have been withdrawn in certain circumstances”. That is important. In other words, the Minister of Immigration will have the power to consider all claims for asylum made in Canada even if they have been received by officers. This is an extraordinary measure that raises legitimate concerns because the board can make mistakes, but so can ministers.

However, under the amendments to Bill C-12, when a minister exercises this power, they must report it to the House, and use of that power must still remain exceptional. Where this power will prove useful is when Immigration Canada conducts investigations and uncovers fraud, by finding flaws or identifying large numbers of applications. Political action can then be taken to immediately withdraw certain asylum claims. If used properly, this exceptional power could clear up the system's backlog and dispose of fraudulent claims. Furthermore, Parliament would have oversight because, every time this power is used, a report must be sent to Parliament, where it can be debated. We can thus ensure that this power is being exercised properly. I still have some concerns in that regard, but I think it is the best solution to enable us to take action, given everything that is happening in relation to immigration.

• (1305)

In addition, if the asylum seeker is not present in Canada, then their claim will not be considered. That seems obvious to me. A refugee claimant who fears persecution cannot be anywhere other than in Canada when their claim is received. Furthermore, the whole section related to the 14-day period has changed. Under the safe third country agreement, if someone enters Canada illegally and is intercepted within 14 days, then they will be returned to the United States. If they are intercepted after 14 days, then that is where things get interesting. In that case, they will be sent back to their country of origin. We see this as a step forward.

There is one thing that the bill does not address, though, which is the distribution of asylum seekers. That is another matter, but it is important to us. Earlier, I was talking about securing public trust in and support for our immigration system. For that to happen, the public needs to feel that there is equity, the process needs to be fair, and Quebeckers also need to get their fair share. However, as Quebeckers in Canada, we often feel that we are not getting our fair share, including our share of investments. As for our share of asylum seekers, thanks to certain geographic realities, Quebec took in 37% of asylum seekers from across the country in 2025, even though we represent 22% of the population. That creates pressure. At the same time, we have international obligations, and Quebeckers are a caring and welcoming people who have had wonderful experiences with refugees.

Still, the distribution of asylum seekers is relevant to the topic of this discussion, namely public confidence in the integrity of the

process. I think the public understands the importance of immigration and the importance of welcoming refugees, as long as the government does its job properly and people feel the provinces are being treated fairly. There is no fairness now. Quebec accounts for 22% of Canada's population, but it is taking in 37% of all asylum seekers. Obviously, this is putting enormous pressure on Quebec's public services. I do want to be very careful when I say that, because 127,000 of the 190,000 asylum seekers in Quebec have work permits. These are people who want to get involved. However, there are a number of concerns that come with that. Quebec is incurring additional costs. The province wants \$700 million from the Government of Canada, but the federal government is refusing to give Quebec the money. It is also refusing to distribute asylum seekers fairly. This issue is still ongoing, and we will continue to press the government to address it.

• (1310)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, Bill C-12 came out of Bill C-2. There are aspects of Bill C-2 that were not incorporated into Bill C-12.

We have had a lot of debate on Bill C-12. I am interested in the Bloc's position, particularly on the issue of lawful access, which is not included in Bill C-12 but was in Bill C-2. Does the member feel comfortable enough to provide his thoughts on whether or not he would have supported Bill C-2 with lawful access?

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, we support Bill C-12, with the amendments that have been made.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree that Bill C-12 is very important, but are there any amendments proposed by the Bloc Québécois that were not included in the current bill?

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, extensive work was done in committee with the Bloc Québécois immigration critic at the time, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean. We think we were able to get our most important amendments adopted. That is why we are supporting Bill C-12 today.

Jacques Ramsay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I applaud my colleague from Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj for his open-mindedness.

He mentioned at the outset that there are currently 300,000 asylum claims. In light of that, it is easy to see why Bill C-12 is so important. He rightly observed that he thought Bill C-12 might help clear up this huge backlog.

Government Orders

As for the integrity of the process, I agree with his comments. However, I want to remind him that the government has earmarked \$1 billion to develop the CBSA. We are now increasing the number of officers responsible for deporting people without a valid reason to be in Canada to 500. In 2025, we increased the number of deportations to 22,000. That has been steadily increasing for the past four years.

As for the distribution of asylum seekers, there are some things the government can do, but at a certain point, it becomes artificial. At a certain point, employment becomes the main motivator. I would like my colleague to talk about that issue. What can we do to encourage asylum seekers to settle outside the cities—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj.

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his well-reasoned question.

With respect to the distribution of asylum seekers, I call on this government to show leadership and ensure that a distribution plan is put in place. That has not been done. It made a timid attempt to do so in the summer of 2024, if memory serves. In the end, roughly 200 asylum seekers were willing to resettle in Newfoundland and Labrador and a few dozen others went to New Brunswick; that was all that was achieved. There are 190,000 asylum seekers, so the results were nowhere near what is required.

We need to find a way to distribute asylum seekers fairly, and if this government shows leadership, it will be able to engage in discussions with the various provinces that are currently not doing their fair share.

• (1315)

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I note that the minister has chosen not to speak about her bill today.

My question is simple. Does the member know why the minister chose not to rise today to speak about her bill, which is important?

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, I have been the immigration critic for a few weeks, and my relationship with the minister is not yet close enough for her to tell me about her choices regarding her agenda, unfortunately. However, I do think that her presence could have enlightened the House, but perhaps not.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, for clarification purposes, I am going to ask about individuals who came to Canada on a temporary visa and have been in Canada for 11 months.

What is the Bloc party's position on someone who has been here for 11 months and came to Canada on a visiting visa? Does he believe in any way that they should be able to claim refugee status?

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, that is what was discussed in committee, and it was determined that Bill C-12 includes a deadline of one year, after which asylum claims cannot be made. It stands to reason that someone who fears persecution if they return to their country would be capable of submitting a claim within a year of arriving here.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the critic for public safety and emergency preparedness, I debated Bill C-12 in committee, and I can say that we put in a lot of hours. We worked until midnight to get through the clause-by-clause consideration of this important bill, which makes rather significant amendments in the realm of refugees and immigration.

Even after such an eloquent speech, does my colleague have anything to add or to ask the government about Bill C-12?

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, I think that Bill C-12 will provide some tools, and that is great. Now all we need is some leadership.

On Monday, the minister came to talk to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. We pointed out to her that there were serious problems with the integrity of the process regarding international students. I did not get the sense that we were talking to someone who is determined to fix the problem. It took me six minutes to get her to admit that she was somewhat concerned about the situation.

I hope that Bill C-12 will be passed, that it will provide the necessary tools, but also that immigration officers will send a clear message that when they encounter potentially fraudulent cases, they do not just sweep them under the rug. They process them, they resolve them, and in doing so, they strengthen the integrity of our immigration process.

[*English*]

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is quite correct. It does not seem like the minister is willing to resolve any of the problems in immigration. In fact, we have terrorists being allowed into the country. Over 700 IRGC agents have been allowed into the country, and one has been deported. The government thinks it is a record to gloat about, but only one has been deported.

The international student program was a complete fiasco from the get-go. We have seen nothing but a deterioration of our immigration system over the past 11 years.

We are calling for the Prime Minister to fire not only the Minister of Immigration but also the two previous ministers who were very complicit in the problems we are having today. I wonder if the member can share his thoughts on whether he thinks incompetent people should be kept in their portfolios by the Prime Minister.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important to look into what happened in order to try to restore some trust among the public. There have definitely been issues with adaptation. There has been a significant increase in asylum seekers and temporary residents.

Government Orders

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada asked the colleges and universities to send in semi-annual reports, which it then set aside and did not process. When the minister was asked about this on Monday, her answer was that she had only been in office since May 2025.

I think that the people who were in office when this happened should come and answer our questions and explain why they did not instruct their officers to act on this very worrisome situation.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The question is on the motion.

If a member participating in person wishes that the amendment be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we ask that it be carried on division.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I declare the motion carried on division.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

AN ACT RESPECTING CYBER SECURITY

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-8, An Act respecting cyber security, amending the Telecommunications Act and making consequential amendments to other Acts, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

[Translation]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): There is one motion in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-8. The Chair has received a request from the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon to select Motion No. 1 on the grounds that it would ensure greater consistency within the bill. However, the Chair is not convinced that this motion could not have been presented in committee. For this reason, Motion No. 1 will not be selected.

There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

[English]

Hon. Joël Lightbound (for the Minister of Public Safety) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on

division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that it be carried on division, please.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Joël Lightbound (for the Minister of Public Safety) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Sima Acan (Oakville West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the vital importance of Bill C-8, an act respecting cybersecurity.

In our current digital age and threat landscape, the protection of our mission-critical infrastructure is not just a technical requirement but a matter of national security, public safety and sovereignty. Bill C-8 is built on two essential pillars, part 1, which amends the Telecommunications Act to make security a primary policy objective, and part 2, which enacts the critical cyber systems protection act. This legislation is designed to safeguard the digital systems that underpin our most vital services, from banking and clearing systems to interprovincial pipelines and nuclear energy facilities.

As a member of the public safety and national security committee, I can say that this legislation was studied extensively. As someone with a technical background, I already understood many of the challenges cybersecurity experts and companies face, but I paid extra attention, asked the hard questions and made sure that every concern was thoroughly examined. Even after I presented the technical facts opposing the Conservatives' technically zero and very dangerous amendments, they themselves verified the correctness of what I said with experts during the committee study. I am confident that Bill C-8 is robust, practical and fully equipped to protect Canada's most critical digital infrastructure from the sophisticated threats of today and tomorrow.

Let me be clear. The bill reflects the government's commitment to public safety and keeping our telecommunications secure. Unfortunately, during our study it became alarmingly clear that the Conservatives are attempting to dismantle and obstruct this critical piece of legislation through a series of loophole amendments that would leave Canada's digital borders wide open to exploitation. Instead of supporting the regulatory processes outlined in this legislation, Conservatives attempted to introduce additional steps to slow down our ability to react and be in line with our Five Eyes partners.

Government Orders

Cyberwarfare does not happen on a schedule that respects the time of security experts or federal courts. If a cybercriminal or threat actor establishes a foothold into our systems and performs a lateral movement through our telecommunications network in real time, judicial authorization could take up to six or even 18 months, as we repeatedly heard from the experts. The government must be able to act and respond swiftly. Requiring a judicial sign-off for every technical directive would cause major delays that would allow cybercriminals to face less resistance and achieve their objectives to further damage our critical systems.

We must be incredibly careful not to blind our defences and readiness with technicalities. Perhaps the most technically dangerous proposal from the Conservatives was the attempt to exclude the content of intelligence from our security oversight. While this may sound like a privacy protection to the uninitiated, it is actually a technical trap. In cybersecurity, the distinction between content and signal intelligence is often blurred. For example, a highly critical signal intelligence, such as an attack indicator that points to a detection of a malware beacon or a computer worm, can be embedded directly within what a lawyer might call content. By excluding this, the Conservatives would legally forbid our experts from regulating the very data streams used to carry out high-level system disruptions.

We must also be wary of creating what I call a silent breach loophole in our national defences. During the committee stage, the Conservatives tried to narrow incident reporting so that companies would be required to report only events that have or may have an adverse material impact. This is reactive, not proactive. This is 20th-century thinking that ignores the technical realities of modern warfare.

Effective cyber-defence and resilience rely on seeing the near misses, small probes and minor incidents that are often the only early warning signs of a massive, coordinated cyber-scheme, which can lead to a much more evolved and even advanced cyber-attack. If we allow companies to stay silent until the damage is already material and measurable, we lose our ability to provide a collective defence and warn the rest of the country about a spreading threat. We cannot afford to wait until a critical system has already been compromised before our security agencies are allowed to see the smoke.

We must be blunt about how certain proposals from the Conservatives during the committee study would cripple enforcement and accountability under this act. At committee, the Conservatives sought to make this bill legally unenforceable by proposing that individuals should be fined only if they knowingly break security rules. This is a massive technical loophole, because, by requiring the government to prove wilful intent, we could no longer hold executives accountable for gross negligence or sloppy security practices that leave Canadian data exposed to hostile actors.

• (1325)

Additionally, they proposed prohibiting the government from identifying the individuals who provide information about security risks. While protecting whistle-blowers is important, this creates a procedural fairness trap. If a company is fined based on evidence from a source that the government is legally barred from naming, a

judge will almost certainly strike down that fine, because the company cannot verify the credibility of the evidence against them.

While we oppose these dangerous loopholes, our government has proposed constructive safeguards to ensure that Bill C-8 respects the rights and privacy of Canadians, unlike the misinformation spread by the Conservatives. We have introduced amendments to explicitly prohibit the decoding of encrypted private communications. This provides legal certainty that the critical cyber systems protection act is about protecting infrastructure, not spying on the private lives of Canadians. We are ensuring that solicitor-client privilege and professional secrecy are never affected, giving companies the peace of mind to be fully transparent with security agencies without fear of losing legal protections.

Instead of surrendering our sovereignty to outside standards bodies, as the Conservatives proposed, we are ensuring that the government can seek consistency with international best practices while keeping the final word on Canada's security right here in this House.

In conclusion, Bill C-8 is about collective defence. It is about ensuring that when a bank, a power grid or a telecom provider is attacked, our whole country can see it, stop it and learn from it. We cannot afford to have a bill filled with the holes and technical blind spots proposed by the Conservatives. This part is absolutely critical, and I hope the Conservatives are paying very close attention, because the stakes here could not be higher.

Canada's critical infrastructure faces a sophisticated threat landscape, not only from individual cybercriminals but with state-sponsored actors moving beyond espionage to pre-position for potential cyber-sabotage according to the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security's "National Cyber Threat Assessment in 2025-2026". The report emphasizes that alongside these threats, ransomware remains the primary cybercrime threat making proactive readiness and resilience essential to national security.

Addressing this urgent threat, Bill C-8 is critical to mandate robust security standards and incident reporting across federally regulated sectors, moving beyond voluntary compliance to safeguard national security.

Government Orders

I urge all members to reject these attempts to create an anonymous, delayed and unenforceable security regime. Let us finally pass a bill that is fast, technical and robust enough to protect Canada from the sophisticated threats of today and tomorrow. I would also urge my Conservative colleagues to listen to the technical experts, those who work on the front lines of cybersecurity, who understand these risks, who explained them during the long hours of committee study, and who have expressed clear support for Bill C-8.

Canada cannot afford delays, loopholes or half measures when it comes to defending our critical infrastructure and our country. The evidence is clear, and the experts have spoken. It is time to act and support this bill for Canadians and our protection.

• (1330)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a fellow engineer, I know the member knows a lot. She is very intelligent.

Certainly this bill addresses a lot of the tools that are needed to combat cybersecurity, and we see that those threats exist. There have been a number of breaches in the government. There are some actual hardware solutions that will be needed as well.

Could the member elaborate on what she thinks the gap is and how the government would fill it?

Sima Acan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague and her comments. I really enjoy talking to her when it comes to technical issues too.

In this bill, we are already addressing cyber-attacks and protection against cyber-attacks, and that also includes hardware protection. That has been studied in the committee. I will be happy to share all the details with my colleague later on, but they can be found in the transcripts of the committee studies.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating my colleague. I enjoyed debating Bill C-8 with her at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. I really appreciated the questions she asked the witnesses and experts with a view to improving Bill C-8 based on their testimony.

Can she honestly state that all members debated Bill C-8 rigorously and professionally and that they all contributed to making it a better bill by debating it and working on it in committee?

• (1335)

[*English*]

Sima Acan: Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed my time studying Bill C-8 at the committee stage with my colleague from the Bloc. She had tremendous input into this study. We also adopted amendments from the Bloc and the NDP for points where they saw that the bill could be improved. All these amendments have been implemented, and I really appreciate their input in this study. The bill has been studied in depth, and the experts were very useful and helpful in helping us understand it.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her remarks and acknowledge her expertise and work on cybersecurity issues. Cybersecurity is a matter of national security, and our government has a responsibility to protect Canadians from all the growing cyber-threats. With Bill C-8, we are taking concrete steps to protect our telecommunications infrastructure and other critical sectors.

I would like to ask my colleague to explain why it is so important to pass this bill at this time.

[*English*]

Sima Acan: Mr. Speaker, the reason we have to pass a bill that protects Canada and Canadians is that we are at a critical point, and we have to work together as legislators. Our first and primary job is to protect Canada. Cybersecurity in this era is a must. It is the number one protection for our borders. Not only do we have borders with our neighbours, but we also have borders in cyberlife as well, so we need to make sure it is protected and that our critical infrastructure is not being attacked by those criminals, so we can protect our country. I can extend this example to nuclear power, traffic lights and our banking system. Imagine waking up one day to a critical mess that is not an American movie scenario.

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to Bill C-8, concerns for privacy and also keeping freedom of expression, which Canadians desire, what safeguards are in place to prevent Liberal government overreach with Bill C-8?

Sima Acan: Mr. Speaker, my colleague also has a technical background, and we enjoy talking about IT infrastructure at different times. I will be very clear that Bill C-8 already has provisions in place that would prohibit the government from overreach when it comes to the privacy of Canadians. This is in the bill already. The bill is about the infrastructure of our country. It is only about the protection of our critical infrastructure and has nothing to do with overreach into people's privacy. There are also provisions and prohibitions that would prevent the government from ordering the decoding of encrypted private communications.

[*Translation*]

Jacques Ramsay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this bill ensures that, going forward, our telecommunications infrastructure and other critical sectors, such as energy and finance, will be required to work together to incorporate national security into their objectives. This bill will help critical infrastructure operators better prepare for, prevent and respond to cyber-incidents.

Does my colleague share that view?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Sima Acan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety also works with us at the SECU committee.

This bill is about the telecommunications sector. It is about the energy, financial and transportation sectors. It is about our critical infrastructure. As Canadians and as legislators, our primary duty is to protect our country and to protect our people, Canadians.

The bill has nothing to do with freedom of speech. The government would have no reach into people's privacy. We will continue to make sure that the government is working for the protection of its systems and Canadians.

• (1340)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been some misinformation put out about this bill, and I think the member can help clear it up. People have said that this would give the minister overreach to be able to shut down an individual's Internet account. The bill is really not about that. It is about infrastructure.

Can the member comment on that?

Sima Acan: Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of misinformation about that. The minister would not have the power over individuals, but over telecom companies. The minister would have the power to shut down a telecommunication infrastructure company, if needed, if there were to be a cyber-attack, before it could spread to other critical infrastructure.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to recognize that cybersecurity continues to be a growing concern, not only here in Canada but also around the world. When we think of it in terms of Canada and the impact that it could have on our communities, if we do not modernize or have proper legislation such as this, the consequences could be very severe. I think it is important that we bring forward this legislation.

I was intrigued by my colleague's remarks and just wanted to see if there was anything else she would add in regard to the importance of having such legislation to protect the security of Canadians.

Sima Acan: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, during committee studies and while answering all the questions from the floor, this bill is a critical bill to protect not only Canadians but also Canadians' information and data.

Every year, the amount of ransom money that companies have to pay criminals is huge. This bill would help protect those companies. It would not only protect those companies, but also protect Canadians, their privacy and their data.

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-8, an act respecting cybersecurity and amending the Telecommunications Act.

Before being elected to represent the people of London—Fanshawe, I spent nearly three decades working in the information technology field. I started young. In 1996, at age 16, while still in

high school at North Lambton Secondary School in Forest, Ontario, I took my first job with a small local Internet service provider. This was the era of dial-up Internet. Many Canadians remember the sound of connecting, waiting for the signal and slowly getting online. It felt new, exciting and, for many, private.

Working on the other side of that connection gave me a very different perspective. It was my first real exposure to how these systems actually function behind the scenes, and what struck me early on was how vulnerable people's information could be.

There is often an assumption that our information is private by default, but in reality, privacy in digital systems has always been more fragile than people realize. Today, the scale and consequences are far greater. That realization has had a lasting impact and has instilled in me a strong sense of responsibility to treat information with care, respect the trust that people place in the systems they rely on and recognize that privacy does not happen by accident in digital systems. It has to be built in, protected and enforced. That principle has guided me throughout my career, and it is exactly the principle that should guide us today as we consider Bill C-8.

There is no doubt that cybersecurity is a national security issue. Canada faces increasing threats from hostile actors, including foreign states, criminal organizations and sophisticated cyber networks. These threats target our infrastructure, institutions, businesses and, increasingly, everyday Canadians.

Increasingly, the cybersecurity landscape is being reshaped by artificial intelligence. AI is enabling faster, more adaptive cyber-attacks, from automated vulnerability scanning to highly convincing phishing and social engineering. At the same time, it is also strengthening our defences, improving threat detection, anomaly identification and response times across networks. The challenge before us is to ensure our policies keep pace with both sides of that reality.

Our telecommunication systems are a critical infrastructure. They underpin our economy, basic safety systems and national defence. Ensuring their security is not optional; it is essential.

Conservatives recognize this. We have constantly said that cybersecurity must be treated as a core component of Canada's national defence strategy. That is why we allowed the bill to come to committee, despite serious concerns about provisions that represented an unacceptable level of government overreach. The only responsible path was to bring it to committee and fix what needed to be fixed. It needed improvement.

Government Orders

As originally drafted, Bill C-8 would grant sweeping powers to the government, particularly to the minister, with insufficient safeguards, unclear thresholds and inadequate protections for privacy and freedom of expression. That is not an abstract concern. This is why getting the limits right in legislation like this matters so much.

One of the clearest examples of overreach in the original bill was in proposed section 15.2. As it was originally written, the bill would have allowed the minister to prohibit telecommunications providers from offering service to any specified person or direct that the service be suspended. Anyone can understand the difference between securing a network and controlling access to it. Imagine having a government official at every Internet provider, such as the one I worked at three decades ago when I was a teenager, dictating who can and cannot get Internet access. That is not the role of government.

If there are criminals or foreign actors who pose such a serious threat to our security that they must be cut off from essential communications, the bigger question is why they are not already in custody or removed from Canada in the first place.

Cybersecurity is about protecting systems from real threats. It is not about giving government a broad and loosely defined power to decide what person keeps their connection and which one loses it. That is not a small, administrative detail. In the wrong hands, it is the kind of power that risks turning cybersecurity into overreach.

The government has shown time and again that it will err on the side of overreach, including through the unlawful invocation of the Emergencies Act, for which courts found it exceeded the authority and infringed upon charter-protected freedoms. That is exactly why powers like this must be clearly defined, tightly constrained and subject to real accountability.

● (1345)

Conservatives pushed back against that overreach. Through amendments at committee, we forced changes that narrowed the scope of that authority, ensuring that it could not be directed arbitrarily at individual Canadians and that stronger thresholds and clearer limits apply. That is just one example.

More broadly, Conservatives worked to fix a pattern of overreach in the bill. We strengthened protections for rights and freedoms by ensuring that lawful expression, political debate and persuasion could not be treated as cybersecurity threats. We made privacy a required consideration, not an afterthought, and strengthened rules around the collection, use and deletion of personal information. We raised the threshold for government action from vague references to threats to a much more serious standard of serious, systematic threats. We replaced weak tests such as relevancy with stronger requirements like necessary and proportionate tests. We required reasonable grounds for ministerial action and narrowed the scope of orders to matters tied to national security, national defence or international relations. We pushed for judicial oversight and greater transparency, because powers of this magnitude should not operate without accountability. Taken together, these changes significantly improved the bill. They did not remove the need for vigilance, but they brought the legislation closer to the balance that Canadians expect.

Cybersecurity is not just about technology. It is about trust. Canadians need to trust that the government will protect them from cyber-threats, but they also need to trust that their rights will not be unnecessarily compromised in the process. That trust is fragile and, once lost, it is difficult to rebuild. That is why it is so important that legislation such as Bill C-8 gets the balance right.

Now, while the bill has been approved, we also acknowledge a broader issue. For too long, the government has been slow to respond to evolving cyber-threats, yet quick to introduce legislation that requires significant correction. Cybersecurity is too important to get wrong. It is too important to treat as an afterthought. Canada needs a proactive, disciplined approach to cybersecurity that includes clear standards, strong partnerships with industry and legislation that is both effective and restrained.

Bill C-8 is a step in that direction, but only because Conservatives forced the changes that were needed to fix it. Despite our proposing major improvements to the bill, the Liberals fought us every step of the way. At committee, Conservatives were able to get an amendment through that required judicial authorization. Before the minister could use the new powers laid out in the legislation, the Liberals found a way to remove that amendment. Just like with the Emergencies Act, there is nothing to stop them from abusing their power. This is a massive concern for me.

As we move forward, we must remain vigilant. Technology will continue to evolve. Threats will become more sophisticated, and so too will the tools available to defend against them, including those powered by artificial intelligence. The pressure to expand government powers will only increase. That makes it even more important that we get the framework right now.

As both threats and defence evolve, we must ensure that our response remains grounded in clear limits, strong safeguards and respect for the rights of Canadians. In that environment, it will be essential to hold firmly to the principles that define us as a country. We must protect our infrastructure, but we must also protect our freedoms. We must respond to threats, but we must do so with restraint and accountability. We must never lose sight of the fact that cybersecurity is not an end in itself. It is a means to protect Canadians, their privacy, their livelihoods and their way of life.

Government Orders

I began my remarks by reflecting on my early experience in the IT field. Back then, even as a young person, I saw first-hand that privacy cannot simply be assumed. It must be actively protected. That lesson applies just as much as today, at a national level. With the powers granted in this legislation comes a responsibility, a responsibility to use those powers carefully, proportionately and with respect for the rights of Canadians.

Conservatives will continue to support strong cybersecurity protections with the appropriate limits. We fought hard to include those limits in the bill, but the Liberals removed some of them. We will also continue to ensure that those protections do not come at the expense of the freedoms that define us, because in Canada, security and liberty must go hand in hand.

• (1350)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is very much concerned about the security of Canadians and the security of commerce. Cyber-threats are very real. They are tangible. They are happening. The government needs to respond. That is exactly what the legislation does.

Where I disagree is in this: There might be some who have a tinfoil hat mentality, in which they try to give the false impression that the government wants to interfere directly with personal information. Some of the examples I have seen, I think, are somewhat misleading.

Would he not agree that the overall principle of cybersecurity is that protecting Canadians and companies is the first priority?

Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the tinfoil hat community, I assure everyone that the Conservatives are not a tinfoil hat community. We are here to protect the freedoms that all Canadians enjoy, such as freedom of expression and privacy. With regard to the bill going through committee, it was the Conservatives' responsibility to respect those freedoms while balancing the cybersecurity protections that both private and public industry need.

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. I was the chief critic for the bill. I was the shadow minister as it was ushered through committee.

One thing I want to say is this: The bill was overly broad. As a party, the Liberals say they love the charter. One thing that will get a bill struck down as unconstitutional is overbreadth, such as use of language like “may” or “any threat”. The bill was a dog’s breakfast when it got to committee.

I am proud of the people I sat with on the public safety committee, who looked at the bill, studied it scrupulously and added a proportionality test to it. They sought to add judicial oversight, which was ruled out of order yesterday by the Speaker, and sought to add things like “necessary” and “reasonable”.

The member for Winnipeg North says that these are tinfoil hat terms; no, these are apple pie when it comes to legal interpretation. The Liberals may not want to have those types of safeguards in the bill. I could say that we as Conservatives will always stand for clear constitutional laws. I invite comments.

• (1355)

Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, I just want to add that, from a Conservative point of view, Canada's national security requires being prepared for the cyberwarfare threats we face. Conservatives fully recognize the importance of cybersecurity as part of the national defence strategy for public and private entities. The Liberal government has been slow to address cyber-threats, with no substantive legislative response for 10 years. For the amendments that went through the committee from the Conservatives, we are addressing this lack of substantive legislative response from the Liberal government.

Sima Acan (Oakville West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from the SECU committee, the critic for public safety, mentioned, there was the phrase “any threat”. Yes, “any threat” has to be in the bill because it is technical wording. If a person does not understand the technicality of cybersecurity, they will definitely come up with those ideas. “Any threat” means that we have to act even if the threat is a near miss, before it is a material threat. If it is a material threat, it is already too late. Our systems are gone.

Regarding privacy and freedom of speech, which my colleague mentioned in his speech and his previous answer, could he make it clear to us where in the bill it is actually attacking the privacy of individuals and freedom of speech?

Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, with regard to threats, the Conservatives put proper limits on ministers' powers, such as raising the threshold for an action from a threat to a serious, systematic threat. With regard to that, it requires reasonable grounds for ministerial actions.

As for the concern of threats, there is also stipulation that it is to include serious, systematic threats, again, to fully recognize the importance of cybersecurity as part of the national defence strategy for public and private entities.

Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague brought up the Liberal government's overreach and the distrust that Canadians have. We have seen the Liberals' track record of freezing the bank accounts of people they do not agree with, their ideology and the list goes on and on.

I would like for him to expand on why Canadians distrust the Liberal government so much.

Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, first of all, Conservatives support the bill's going to committee to fix the glaring problems with it, such as the fact that Liberals have also demonstrated they are willing to breach people's privacy with Bill C-2. Conservatives have repeatedly forced the government to improve major shortcomings in government legislation. Cybersecurity is too important to leave in the hands of the Liberal government with all its failures.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)
[English]

WORLD THEATRE WEEK

Chi Nguyen (Spadina—Harbourfront, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the occasion of World Theatre Week, organized by the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres and celebrated around the world, culminating in World Theatre Day on March 27, 2026.

Spadina—Harbourfront and Toronto's downtown are home to a vibrant theatre community, including Jumbies; Factory Theatre; the Mirvish theatres, the Royal Alex and the Princess of Wales; and the soon-to-be-open Corleck building, among others.

At a time when questions of identity and culture matter, telling our own stories in our own voices is essential to preserving Canada's cultural sovereignty. Canada is home to hundreds of theatres in every province and territory, from coast to coast to coast. From small community stages to major performing arts institutions, they play a critical role in our arts and culture sector. This sector contributes \$131 billion to Canada's economy and supports more than one million jobs.

This week, I invite all members to celebrate World Theatre Week, visit a local theatre and go see a show.

* * *

NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS WEEK

Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in April, Canadians will mark National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week. April 7 is Green Shirt Day, reminding us of the importance of organ donation. These annual initiatives highlight the critical need for donors, encourage donor registration and celebrate the many lives saved through transplantation.

More than 4,700 Canadians are waiting for a life-saving transplant. It is important to let our loved ones know that we want to be organ donors. Whether as living donors or with donation at the time of our passing, we have the power to save lives. We can give the gift of life, the greatest gift of all. I ask everyone to please become a registered organ and tissue donor.

* * *

CUBA

Ernie Klassen (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently met with the Cuban ambassador, who described the

Statements by Members

situation in his country as very dire and noted a need for solar power generators. Last week, a total collapse of the electrical grid occurred, leaving all 10 million people without electricity. This was also the case for critical infrastructure, including hospitals. People are left without basic necessities.

Cuba's lack of oil has been catastrophic. At a time of uncertainty and struggle, Canada is stepping up to support people in need. Our government has recently delivered \$8 million in humanitarian assistance to help deliver vital support. Canada does not support any country's attempt to take over another sovereign nation. Canada continues its commitment to constructive engagement with Cuba, grounded in respect for international law, for sovereignty and for freedom of people to choose their way of life.

Canada will continue to focus on the well-being of the Cuban people and uphold the values—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

* * *

MAPLE SEASON

Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from the first run of sap to the last maple taffy, communities across our region are coming together to celebrate one of Canada's oldest and sweetest traditions. Whether it is Maple Mayhem at Muskoka Lakes Farm and Winery, the community spirit of the Parry Sound Maple Fest, the energy of the Muskoka Maple Festival in downtown Huntsville, the hands-on experiences of the Muskoka maple trail or a true working sugar bush experience at Hubbert's Maple Products during the Almaguin Maple Festival, there is something happening in every corner of Parry Sound—Muskoka.

These events remind us of who we are: hard-working, community-minded and deeply connected to the land and the traditions that built this country. This spring I encourage everyone, locals and visitors alike, to get out, bring their families, support our producers and take part in these incredible celebrations. When people show up, they are not just enjoying maple season, they are supporting the people and communities who make Parry Sound—Muskoka the most incredible place to call home.

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[Translation]

FRANCOPHONIE MONTH

Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 20, we celebrated the International Day of La Francophonie, a perfect opportunity to highlight the vitality and impact of the French language and the richness of our linguistic duality, which strengthens our identity and unites us. All month long, francophone communities have been actively celebrating our heritage.

Statements by Members

The theme of the 28th Rendez-vous de la Francophonie was “Activate your Francophonie”, and there were plenty of exciting things on the agenda. I had the privilege of attending several events, including the FrancoFun party at École secondaire catholique Béatrice-Desloges, Ottawa's 2026 Gala de la francophonie plurielle and the reception on Parliament Hill. To close out the month, I will be attending the mayor's 19th annual Francophone RendezVous tomorrow morning.

This month highlights the presence and contributions of members of the francophone community in the national capital region and beyond. I wish everyone an enjoyable Francophonie Month.

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[English]

PEACHLAND LEGION

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to share with the House that on December 23, 1926, the Peachland Royal Canadian Legion Branch 69 was presented with its charter. I am proud to note that this original charter, issued by the British Empire Service League, still hangs on the wall of that legion to this very day.

The Peachland Legion was established in the aftermath of the First World War by returning soldiers, marking an incredibly proud moment for the small community of Peachland, British Columbia. For nearly a century, the legion has supported veterans who have served in the Second World War, Korea, Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia, the Gulf War, Afghanistan and more recent theatres where our men and women answered the call to serve. May we all stand in support of our veterans, who have sacrificed so much for our great country.

For 100 years, the Peachland Legion has withstood the test of time, and I am confident it will stand steadfast for generations to come. I invite the House to join me in celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Peachland Royal Canadian Legion Branch 69.

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● (1405)

NORTH YORK GENERAL HOSPITAL

Maggie Chi (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this occasion to advise the House that, for the eighth consecutive year, North York General Hospital, in my riding of Don Valley North, has been Canada's top-ranked community academic hospital. It was also ranked the fourth-leading hospital in Canada. Going from strength to strength, North York General ranked in the top 3% of hospitals from around the world.

This international recognition reflects the outstanding care being delivered at North York General and affirms the collective impact of its entire team. I commend the members of its team for their professionalism and dedication to their patients, a powerful reminder of the strength of our patient-centred health care system. It is a moment of pride for our community and a reminder that the people of Don Valley North and Canadians across the country strive for excellence and that we build on our past successes to reach even greater heights.

EASTER SEALS

Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured by the opportunity to recognize Easter Seals for the incredible work it does. Since 1922, it has been a tireless advocate for the disability community, helping to create a more inclusive and accessible society.

Last year alone, the organization sent more than 6,000 people of all ages to camp and worked with more than 150,000 individuals across Canada. Raising awareness and funds, its ultimate mission is to ensure that everyone living with a disability has access to the services, equipment, programs and support they need in order to live their life to the fullest.

As we mark Easter Seals Month, I want to thank the national and provincial organizations and all their dedicated volunteers for the work they do for the organizations and for their fellow Canadians.

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[Translation]

GILLES BRASSARD

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one Quebecker's ingenuity is bringing honour to our entire nation on the international stage. Gilles Brassard, a professor at the University of Montreal, has been given the Turing Award, the world's highest honour in computer science.

This prize, often compared to the Nobel Prize, is a crowning achievement in a long career dedicated to advancing quantum computing and cryptography, the secure transfer of information. In the words of the Association for Computing Machinery, which awards this honour, Gilles Brassard's work has “expanded the boundaries of computing and set in motion decades of discovery across disciplines”. This marks the culmination of a career that began in the 1970s for this prodigy, who began his studies at the University of Montreal at the age of 13.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I congratulate Gilles Brassard and thank him for continuing to shine the international spotlight on Quebec intellect. We must also commend his decision not to travel to the United States to receive his award, in protest of the economic war launched by Donald Trump. I thank and congratulate Mr. Brassard.

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[English]

COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN WHITBY

Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I could not be more proud to support our region, town and community partners in compassionately and effectively addressing homelessness in our community. The site at 1635 Dundas Street East is a lifeline in Whitby, a place where people facing some of their hardest moments can find safety, care and dignity.

Statements by Members

Our new government is backing that critical work with a \$40-million investment, turning the site into supportive and transitional housing. With 104 new beds, on-site health care and recovery supports, this facility offers more than just a place to lay one's head. This is what real solutions look like: fewer people sleeping outside, fewer emergencies and public safety concerns on our streets, and frontline workers connecting people to care faster, preventing crisis before it happens. Most important, the project gives people time, stability and the support they need to rebuild their life.

This is what standing up for Canada really looks like.

* * *

● (1410)

EASTER

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Easter is the most important celebration, because it marks the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the son of God. Humans are not perfect. We sin, and this sin requires justice. That is why it is an incredible act of love that our Creator descended to earth to bear our punishment and rise again on the third day.

As Jesus himself said in the Gospel of John, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die”. This promise was fulfilled on Easter morning when the tomb was found empty. In the Gospel of Matthew, the angel declared, “He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.” This is the good news. We are truly forgiven through the death of Jesus, so whether it is legal or not, I will always proclaim, “Christ is king. He is risen, risen indeed.”

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EID

Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Eid is a time to celebrate with family and friends, and for communities to come together in joy and solidarity.

I was happy to join members of my community in Ottawa Centre and the diplomatic corps at a celebration organized by Abbis Mahmoud and Koussei Kurbaj that combine the Eid celebration and fundraising for the Ottawa breakfast program. The program is run by the Ottawa Network for Education. It serves over 16,000 students every day in 215 schools across Ottawa. Events like this complement our government's efforts through the national school food program to support childhood development, save money for families and, of course, feed children. That is what Eid is all about.

Eid Mubarak to everyone.

* * *

HOCKEY

Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over eight years, one's perspective can change, from hockey player to hockey parent. This winter, my wife ran into Mr. Cross at the Strasbourg rink, watching kids play the sport his son loved. His son was Mark Cross, the assistant coach for the Humboldt Broncos, who died in the crash. On April 6, it will be eight years since the crash. Today my words are inspired by Mr. Cross and all hockey parents.

God looked down and said we needed hockey parents, people who can cut sticks, sharpen skates and tape ankles. God needed someone who can get up when it is still dark, pack the cooler bag, travel icy roads, fight blizzards and beat the rising sun for early winter ice times, all with a smile on their faces for the love of the game. He needed someone who can run on coffee and rink burgers, make a noisemaker out of anything and cheer on every kid like they are their own. He needed someone who would give up seven months of weekends to sit in a cold rink and be there for the thrill of victories but also shed the tears of defeat. God therefore made a hockey parent.

On April 6, I would ask everyone to please keep the Humboldt Broncos in their thoughts and prayers and to say a little extra blessing for our hockey parents. Last, leave a stick on the porch in case one of our Broncos needs a spare for their evening game upstairs.

God bless Humboldt.

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[*Translation*]

TAX FILING

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, filing a tax return is essential for receiving benefits such as the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit, which can provide up to \$900 for a single individual and up to \$2,000 for a family of four this year. This new benefit will support 12 million low- and middle-income individuals to offset increased expenses related to food inflation.

I want to say a big thank you to the dozens of volunteers at Patro Laval, in my riding, who will be providing nearly 3,000 people with a free and confidential tax filing service until April 23. I also want to thank the Government of Canada for supporting this important initiative from Patro Laval and many other organizations across the country through the community volunteer income tax program.

*Oral Questions**[English]***LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, higher prices are the official policy of the Liberal Party. The results speak for themselves: 100,000 jobs lost this year, a shrinking economy, the second-highest unemployment in the G7, the highest household debt and the highest food inflation. Canadians cannot eat empty Liberal slogans. Broken promises do not put a roof over Canadians' heads. Spending is out of control. The Brookfield government has already broken its deficit target. The Prime Minister can hide overseas for only so long.

Canadians are waking up to the consequences of 11 long years of bad Liberal policy. The government's only solution is more of the same: more corporate welfare for well-connected insiders, more new bureaucracies to slow development, and more recycled announcements and reused talking points. Now they will reap a gas tax windfall, but Canadians will not see a dime.

The bill for these bad Liberal policies will come due, but it is Canadians who will pay the price.

* * *

• (1415)

*[Translation]***OSCAR FOR BEST ANIMATED SHORT FILM**

David Myles (Fredericton—Oromocto, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge an extraordinary moment for Canadian animation and film.

The Oscar for best animated short film this year is a global tribute to Montreal filmmakers Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski. It also reflects the talent and creativity in our country. This award serves as an inspiration to our artists and is a source of pride for Canada.

[English]

At the podium, Chris and Maciek told the world that their film could be made only at the National Film Board of Canada.

This is the 12th Oscar win for the NFB. We should be proud of the enduring role the organization has played in supporting bold, original voices and sharing Canadian stories with the world.

[Translation]

Congratulations to Maciek and Chris and the entire team at the National Film Board on this remarkable achievement.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[English]***TAXATION**

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it used to be that when oil prices went up, the Canadian dollar went up along with them, but it is not. Why is this? It is because the government is attacking our energy industry. Its industrial

carbon tax drives investment out of the energy sector, and despite massive new powers, it has still gotten no new pipelines built.

Even the Liberal Prime Minister has said when our dollar is weak, food becomes more expensive, but he does not realize that it is his job to give Canadians a strong dollar. Liberals never change.

Will the Prime Minister reverse his radical environmental agenda so our dollar can be strong and Canadians can eat, heat and house themselves?

Hon. Jill McKnight (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will circle back to that question, but today we need to start with the good news for Canadians and for Canada. Today, the NATO secretary general confirmed that Canada has met NATO's 2% spending—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Jill McKnight: Mr. Speaker, this historic investment confirms that we are doing our fair share here at home, on the continent and in the alliance, investing in Canada's women and men in uniform. Today and every day, NATO allies know they can count on Canada.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, even the Liberal Prime Minister acknowledged, “one thing impacting...food prices is the fall in the Canadian dollar”, but it is his job to give us a strong dollar. He has chosen to keep his industrial carbon tax that drives investment out of Canada. This is not the first time he has racked up a record like this. His tenure in the U.K. was described as, “characterised by stagnant growth, stalled living standards, and declining productivity”. Does this sound familiar?

The Liberal Prime Minister is great at getting important jobs, but is just terrible at actually doing those jobs. Will he reverse his radical environmental agenda so our dollar can be strong and food can become more affordable?

[Translation]

Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have good news for Canadians today.

The Secretary General of NATO has confirmed that Canada has met NATO's target of 2% of GDP for military spending. This historic investment confirms that we are doing our fair share, both at home on the continent and within the alliance.

Oral Questions

Today, as every day, NATO allies know they can count on Canada.

[English]

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear today that the Liberals want to talk about everything but the affordability crisis Canadians are suffering. The Prime Minister has not reversed the affordability crisis in Canada as he promised, because he refuses to acknowledge that his radical environmental agenda is driving up costs and driving investment out of our country. Canadians need permanent relief from Liberal policies like the industrial carbon tax, which impacts the cost of just about everything we grow, ship and purchase. Everything is more expensive, from housing to gas and groceries.

Will the Liberals finally stop attacking vital—

• (1420)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was just in Houston, where I was with Secretary Wright and Secretary Burgum, and they were applauding Canada for its record oil production and record natural gas production, which are keeping prices affordable in North America.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal Prime Minister, Canadians are suffering due to this affordability crisis, and the cost of everything is going up. It used to be the case in this country that if the price of oil went up, our dollar went up, but thanks to radical Liberal policies, that is no longer the case. Canadians have suffered long enough under the Liberal government.

Will the Liberals reverse their radical policies, like the industrial carbon tax, that are driving down our dollar and give Canadians relief from this cost of living crisis?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives cannot stand good news, but I have good news for them. Not only are we meeting our NATO commitment, but we tabled legislation to boost home sales in the country with new construction. They should rejoice. We are going to boost construction and we are going to support our industry. We are going to support our construction workers.

Instead of yelling, they should applaud our construction workers across the nation. They are going to help us build this country. This is a day to celebrate. We are going to help our workers build our construction sector and make Canada strong.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals parade around and feed off delusions, Canadian families are still wondering what they are going to be able to afford this year as Easter approaches.

Beef prices are up 14%. Easter ham is 10% more expensive. Fuel prices are skyrocketing. The Liberal Prime Minister is imposing a hidden tax of 7¢ a litre. It is going to increase to 17¢ a litre. He is just like Liberal Justin Trudeau.

When is this Liberal Prime Minister going to axe the hidden taxes that are driving up the price of gas, transportation and groceries so that Canadians can feed their families?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we see that the Conservatives are incapable of hearing good news. Not only do we have some good news, but we are also reaching our 2% NATO target. They should be applauding. We have more good news to make them happy before they go back to their ridings.

This morning, we introduced a bill that will help us increase new home sales in Canada. We are strengthening the construction industry. We are strengthening the work of construction workers across the country. Today is a day to celebrate our construction industry and defence members—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière.

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is really nothing new about the Liberals. It is always the same old story. They make announcements, but nothing ever happens.

Everything at the grocery store costs more. There are more expenses, more debt, more food inflation and more unemployed families, yet all the Liberals can think to do is celebrate. It is unbelievable how out of touch they are with the reality in Canada. No matter which prime minister is at the head of the government, it is always the same thing. Nothing ever changes.

When are they going to put an end to these old Liberal policies that are so costly for everyone?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect and affection for my colleague, but I am sure that not even he believes what he is saying.

The reality is that our government was able to create more than 80,000 jobs in the past six months. Meanwhile, the U.S. economy, which is 11 times bigger than ours, lost 6,000 jobs over the same time period.

According to the Bank of Canada, inflation is under control. Salaries are going up by 4.3% across the country. That is part of what it means to work for Canadians.

*Oral Questions***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said he was very disappointed with Air Canada CEO Michael Rousseau for expressing his condolences in English only. However, he has no business being disappointed. Three years ago, his government voted against requiring leaders of companies like Air Canada to be bilingual.

His government is being sued by the organization Droits collectifs Québec because it is not complying with its own Official Languages Act. His government is investing every penny of its official languages plan in promoting English in Quebec instead of French.

How can the Prime Minister be disappointed in a situation for which the federal government is primarily to blame?

• (1425)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member seems to be conveniently forgetting that we have invested \$4 billion in our francophone strategy with the overhaul of the new Official Languages Act.

As far as the situation with the CEO of Air Canada is concerned, we are obviously disappointed. He should have known better. We expect there to be a—

An hon. member: What are you going to do, Marc?

Hon. Marc Miller: Mr. Speaker, I am being interrupted by the Bloc Québécois once again. They do not want to hear the answer. This is ridiculous.

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, instead of expressing disappointment with Michael Rousseau, the Prime Minister should lead by example.

Instead, he is likely the only prime minister in half a century not to have a francophone speech writer. His government has made unilingual English appointments, starting with Governor General Mary Simon. It was under the Liberals that the federal public service became the worst economic sector in Quebec in terms of ability to work in French.

Does the Prime Minister understand that the example he sets encourages the Michael Rousseaus of this world?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to point out to the member across the way that we have a record number of Liberal members from Quebec. I speak to the Prime Minister. Furthermore, his cabinet includes a number of francophones. I think he is well supported. Furthermore, we saw during the election campaign that he made extra efforts to learn French. It is not easy, but I think Canadians know full well that the Prime Minister is making incredible efforts to improve his French.

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister says he is disappointed by Michael Rousseau's unilingual English message, the federal government has spent more than \$2.4 billion to strengthen English in Quebec since 1995. Billions of dollars have been spent to anglicize Quebec in the past 30 years, and this continues every year. We do not need to look any

further to understand how Michael Rousseau has managed to live his whole life in Quebec without speaking a word of French.

When will the Liberals realize that there are many people like Michael Rousseau in Quebec and that it is largely their fault?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, without denying the fact that anglophones have rights in Quebec, it is clear that the member opposite is spouting nonsense. I am not going to dignify that with an answer.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a grocery store worker in Haldimand—Norfolk contacted my office to say \$120 used to buy five bags of groceries, and now it barely fills one. Even though she works at a grocery store, she is still forced to use the food bank. The Prime Minister has delivered the worst food inflation in the G7, and he even plans to raise the clean fuel standard tax by 7%.

Will the Prime Minister get rid of the food tax so Canadians can afford to eat?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that world events, supply chain challenges and other things have generated inflation, and we understand that it has had a deleterious impact on the ability of families to afford some basic essentials. That is precisely why this government put in place the Canada child benefit, dental care and pharmacare, and made child care agreements resulting in \$10-a-day child care in most of Canada's provinces.

The question Canadians really have is, why do the Conservatives vote against them?

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are in distress and struggling with high food costs. The Prime Minister promised change but instead, the affordability crisis has just gotten worse over the past year. The Prime Minister broke his promise. He said grocery prices would go down. Now Canada has the worst food inflation in the entire G7. His plan to increase the clean fuel standard tax by 7% would only make things worse.

Will the Liberal Prime Minister cancel this tax on food so Canadians can afford to eat?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the situation. That is why, on this side of the House, we have provided a number of measures to help Canadians and Canadian families.

I think of the Canada child benefit, which is making a real difference. I think of the national school food program, which is helping kids across the country. I think about the Canada disability benefit our government put in place. I think about the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, which is going to help more than 12 million people.

We know it is an issue. That is why we are working to tackle affordability every single day.

• (1430)

Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, almost a year ago, when asked if there would be a barometer for Canadians to hold the Prime Minister accountable, he responded, “Canadians will hold us to account by their experience at the grocery store, when they are paying their electricity bill, when they or their children are looking for a place to live”. Now, 10 months later, groceries are higher than ever, affordable housing is non-existent, and the price of fuel is skyrocketing. This is a direct result of increasing the clean fuel standard tax by 242%.

Will the Prime Minister get rid of this tax on food so Canadians can afford to eat?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are getting the same question after question from that side of the House. The only thing that changes on that side is leaders. They have had six of them in the past 10 years. It is probably soon to be seven.

On this side of the House, we are focused on affordability. We have cut taxes for 22 million Canadians. We have introduced the groceries and essentials benefit, which is going to put up to \$1,900 in the pockets of working families.

On this side of the House, we are going to continue to focus on affordability. They can focus on changing leaders time after time.

Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after 10 years, the only thing the Liberal government is focused on is consistently delivering excuses. The government needs to look at home for the root causes that have created a decade of debt and deficits, like the government's own economic and monetary policies. The government continuously raids the bank accounts of Canadians to fund vanity projects like Alto rail, instead of investing in much-needed infrastructure and housing.

Again, will the government scrap the fuel standard tax so struggling Canadians can get a modicum of relief?

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, what we are hearing from that side of the House, what we are hearing heckled today, is that the programs we have been putting in place to help Canadians and Canadian families are glorified food stamps, that these are ideological, radical programs. In fact, they are actually designed to help Canadians. We have boosted them, whether it is our groceries and essentials benefit, which Canadians are going to be feeling here just this spring;

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making our national school food program permanent; or expanding our dental care program. When I talk to people in my riding, they talk about how these programs are making a difference in people's lives, but the Conservatives keep voting against them.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised the best economy in the G7, and he is delivering precisely the opposite: the highest household debt, the highest food inflation and an economy literally shrinking under the weight of his policies. What is particularly concerning is the decline in foreign and domestic investment. C.D. Howe called it “Canada's investment crisis”. Adjusted for growth and labour inflation, Canada's investment, all business investment, has declined. We have offered a positive solution: Let us remove the industrial carbon tax.

Will they do it?

Hon. Adam van Koevorden (Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives just learned a new word, “affordability”, and they use it often in the House of Commons, but every time they get the chance to vote in favour of an affordability measure backed by experts, they vote against. This feigned new interest in supporting lower-income Canadians is not fooling anybody. Besides, our policies are working, particularly on rents. I will read a couple of headlines for the Conservatives: “Now is the ‘best time’ to rent in Canada as asking price hits 31-month low”. When we build more affordable housing, rents go down, and that is what this government has been doing for years now. The Conservatives can get on board.

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was about business investment. I will try again. C.D. Howe says that investment per worker has declined 25% since the Liberals took office. Weak investment yesterday and today means lower wages and lower productivity tomorrow. Two years ago, the Bank of Canada said we had to break glass on this issue. A year later, C.D. Howe said it was a four-alarm emergency, but here we still are. We have offered a positive solution: Let us remove the industrial carbon tax, which is a clear drag on business investment.

Please, I ask for an actual answer this time.

Oral Questions

• (1435)

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was beside the Premier of Alberta earlier this week in the United States. She was applauding the work of this government. She believed the work of this Major Projects Office has brought over \$126 billion of investment to Canada in the last six months.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Prime Minister is busy grandstanding once again, bragging about how much he is spending on defence, but it is all just an illusion. He stood up a new agency, hired more bureaucrats and created a taxpayer-funded bank. He is issuing massive corporate subsidies to large defence contractors and enriching Liberal insiders. Meanwhile, Canada has only 300 troops defending the Arctic, and half our equipment is unusable. We do not even have new fighter jets or anyone who can actually fly them.

Why is the Prime Minister wasting money on backroom bureaucrats and corporate insiders instead of giving our frontline troops the equipment they need?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that member, who was around in those days, is not really very nostalgic for the peak of 0.99% of GDP that was achieved under the Conservatives. This government is going to equip our members in uniform. We are going to give them raises. We are going to improve their bases. We are going to buy new equipment. We are going to create jobs, jobs and more jobs in the defence industry in this country, unlike the Conservatives.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us face it. The Liberal Party of Canada is an organization that has something of an influence over the government. However, at its convention, that party proposed to urge the Government of Canada to invoke a veto over any provincial legislation that pre-emptively uses the notwithstanding clause. That ultimately constitutes veto power over the sovereignty of the Quebec National Assembly.

I would like to know whether the government is in favour of that proposal.

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal government's power of disallowance has not been used since 1943, and it will not be used by this government.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government did not simply go to the Supreme Court to challenge a law passed by the Quebec National Assembly. It went there to curtail Quebec's powers within its own areas of jurisdiction. With its fear campaign and talk about slavery and summary execution, this government is attempting a real constitutional coup. If the Liberals

want to amend the Constitution to weaken Quebec, then they know the deal. Either they launch a constitutional review, or they respect Quebec's powers.

Which will they choose?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find the Bloc's questions absolutely baffling. One thing I know about Quebecers is that we are proud to live in a society governed by the rule of law. The fact that some Quebecers are challenging a law before the Supreme Court is entirely legitimate. They are well within their rights to do that. On this side of the House, we respect the work of the Supreme Court, and we will let it continue to do that work.

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CARBON PRICING

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a year ago, Canadians thought they were getting a new Liberal Prime Minister, but he is just like all the other Liberals we have seen over the past 10 years. Our investments are not doing well. Today, the C.D. Howe Institute is reporting that industrial investments are down: investment per worker is down 25%, investment in buildings is down by 32% and investment in machinery is down by 29%. There is one thing that will go up on April 1 and that is the Liberal industrial tax. While industrial investment is declining, the industrial tax is set to increase.

Is there a Liberal who can explain to me how that is going to work?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is something I can certainly explain to my colleague, whose friendship I rather enjoy, and that is the fact that the tariffs that are currently in place against the manufacturing sector are affecting our industrial base. This certainly has an impact on investment.

In the meantime, the government has not just been sitting around twiddling its thumbs. What have we done? We have been working on a plan. We have worked with businesses in Quebec and across the country. We have also made sure to help those directly affected by the tariffs, including workers and entrepreneurs. Our goal is to create jobs, despite everything. Guess what? We have created 80,000 of them over the past six months.

• (1440)

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last two months, 100,000 Canadians lost their jobs. That is the reality. While the government blames everything on Donald Trump, the reality is that this government could be taking direct action. Instead, what the government is doing for industry is increasing the Liberal industrial carbon tax. That is the truth.

When investments go down, taxes go up. That makes no sense. It is proof that this Liberal government has not changed at all in 10 years. It is using the same formulas that led to the loss of 100,000 jobs in the past two months.

Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have some good news for my colleague. Last week, I was with the Minister of Finance in my riding, where Kraft Heinz announced a \$250-million investment to increase the number of Canadian products being made here at home in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. That is because Kraft Heinz has confidence that the new government knows what it is doing with the economy. I think we should look at this investment as an asset for Quebec and Canada.

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, whether we are talking about a new Liberal government or an old Liberal government, it is a Liberal government that is no good at math. For the past 10 years, the same Liberals have been ruining our country. Canada has lost more than 100,000 jobs since the start of the year. Business investment per worker has fallen by 25% since the last Conservative government and investment in industrial and commercial buildings has dropped by 32%.

Will the Liberals cut the industrial carbon tax so that our country can once again become a place to invest?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is making a very serious allegation when he says that the government is no good at math. Sure, if he challenged the Prime Minister to a singing contest, then he might win, but if he challenged the Prime Minister to a math contest, then I am certain the Prime Minister would come out the winner.

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TRANSPORTATION

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for several weeks now, there has been a lot of conflicting information circulating about the Quebec City tramway project. Here we have the member for Beauport—Limoilou telling us about a \$13-billion project, while project managers are telling us it will cost \$7.6 billion. One of the things that we do not know but that we need to know is how much money the federal government is willing to put into this project, because everyone in Quebec City is waiting to hear this news.

Can the government's Quebec Lieutenant give us the answer?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, March 26, 2026, is a historic day. It is the day when the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles finally threw his support behind the tramway project, a landmark initiative for Quebec City with economic spinoffs of \$10.5 billion. It is a historic day because, just a year ago, he was campaigning, hand on heart, saying that he would take away federal funding from Quebec City residents. We are talking about \$1.44 billion in funding that is set to increase. We are signing agreements with Quebec City worth \$25 billion for public transit over the next 10 years, in addi-

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tion to \$13 billion in funding through my colleague's infrastructure fund. I am very much looking forward to working with him on this important project.

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me clarify that just because I am asking him how much money he is putting in does not mean that I am in favour of the project. We have been clear: Our position is still the same.

However, during the last election campaign, the Liberals promised to fund 40% of the project. The project is starting now, but the funding has not been confirmed. There is legitimate concern in Quebec City.

Can the minister confirm that his government will be there before the tree clearing starts? If 100-year-old trees are cut down and there is no money, what then?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing is certain. Honestly, I feel like the world is upside down when I hear these questions from the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, because what he promised the people of Quebec City was nothing. Tramway projects are good for Edmonton and good for Calgary, but Quebec City should get nothing. That was the Conservatives' pledge, and it is completely unacceptable.

In contrast, we have been there since day one, since 2018. It has taken him eight years to get on board. We are contributing \$1.44 billion with a budget of \$25 billion over the next 10 years, including \$13 billion for infrastructure. We are working closely with Quebec to secure more money for transportation in Quebec, throughout Quebec.

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[English]

FINANCE

Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a great day for Canada. Consideration of the budget implementation act is nearly complete, and we can expect royal assent shortly.

Families in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt know we are investing in Canada's future, building an economy that is strong and resilient to global shocks, unlocking generational investments in our long-term prosperity, driving economic growth and modernizing our tax and financial systems. Can the Minister of Finance tell us how else the bill will help Canadians?

● (1445)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her strong leadership. She is right. There is even more good news. We can just look at the Conservatives' faces. They are waiting for that, because they are going into their ridings.

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We are expecting to get royal assent for the budget implementation act. This is a great day for Canadians, because Canadians will see a production-enhancing tax credit and a historic investment in housing. We are going to reduce red tape. We are going to make the national school food program permanent. We are going to modernize our consumer-driven banking. We are going to build the strongest economy in the G7.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister stood in this place and tried to tell Canadians that immigration is under control. Well, here are the facts. The temporary foreign worker program has ballooned by 178% since 2015. The Auditor General revealed that 97% of student fraud cases are not even being investigated, and the asylum backlog is a staggering 300,000 cases. However, Canadians cannot find jobs, housing or health care.

This did not happen by accident. This was the work of three incompetent ministers, and all three are still in cabinet. When will the Prime Minister fire these ministers and fix the core issues in our immigration system?

Hon. Buckley Belanger (Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will get to the question in due time, but I want to say to the Conservatives across the way from Saskatchewan who have been here 10 years that I have been here 10 months, and what did I see? It was defending our northern border, check mark; building the one Canadian economy, check mark; strengthening our world trading partnership, check mark; creating nation-building projects across Canada, check mark; \$2.5 billion in uranium sales with India, check mark; and canola sales dramatically increasing, check mark. More good news is that we are just getting started.

Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he forgot scurvy in his riding, check mark.

The Prime Minister says things are under control, but with seven ministers in 11 years, the system is getting worse and worse.

Yesterday, the justice minister issued a fake apology for his failed tenure as immigration minister by blaming the provinces, as if he held no responsibility. His successor, the current Minister of Culture, oversaw the surge in asylum claims that have overwhelmed our health care system and housing supply. The current immigration minister is so incompetent that her own Liberal colleagues are calling for her to be fired.

The Prime Minister chose these people. Will he take responsibility for their failure and fire these cabinet ministers?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, personal attacks speak for themselves.

I have great respect, in fact, for the member. We have had the pleasure of working together on the House of Commons committee responsible for immigration. He understands that, fundamentally, immigration has played a very important role in the history of this country, and that needs to continue. He also understands, as our

side does, that transformations in immigration policy are needed. In fact those are under way: a 60% decline in the number of international students on an annual basis, a 53% decline in the number of temporary residents and a one-third decline in the number of asylum seekers.

We will continue that work. Of course we take seriously the recommendations of the Auditor General, because change is needed—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been hearing something troubling from people in my community. They tell me that the international students whose visas have expired are being told by immigration consultants, “Just claim asylum. You'll be able to stay.”

Now people are gaming a system that was meant for people fleeing real danger, and this is clogging the line for genuine refugees who actually need protection. The Prime Minister says that claims are down, but since 2015, the backlog has exploded from 10,000 to 300,000 asylum claims.

Will the Liberals finally admit this is happening and fix it before the entire immigration system loses its integrity?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me just say that the new government is ensuring that we have control over the immigration system.

Today we passed Bill C-12, which gives greater law enforcement powers to both the CBSA and the IRCC. For example, when people are using the asylum system to game the system, it will enable officials to disallow their claims.

We are taking control of the immigration system, and Bill C-12 is a perfect example of how we are moving forward.

● (1450)

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not just the abuse of our refugee system that has people in my riding shaking their head. They are hearing about situations like this: a young woman going about her life, when a stranger violated her by groping her not once but twice. He was charged, he was convicted and then he was given a discharge by the judge, and no criminal record, because without a record he can stay in the country and fight deportation.

After years of decisions like this, will the Prime Minister fire the ministers responsible for creating this out-of-control immigration system?

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Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member will be aware of the landmark 2013 Supreme Court decision, the Pham decision. That decision makes very clear that when it comes to assessing the criminal actions of individuals, whether they are foreign nationals or Canadians, public safety always takes precedence. If the individual has concerns with the decision of the court, that decision is a court decision. It is not a government decision. It does not relate to legislation.

As far as visas are concerned, I remind the member of her leader's comments when he was parading around the country.

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal government, the immigration system is more out of control than ever. The Prime Minister claims that temporary foreign worker number are down by 50%, yet the facts say otherwise. In 2025 alone, approvals hit a staggering 167,000, nearly triple the 60,000 in 2015. At the same time, youth unemployment is surging to 14%, and young Canadians cannot find work.

The Liberal Prime Minister either does not know his own numbers or is choosing to ignore them.

How many more Canadian workers have to be pushed out of jobs and into food banks before the Liberal government admits its immigration is betraying 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, I have respect for my colleague opposite, but I would remind him that TFWs are less than 1% of the workforce and that temporary foreign workers use is down by 70% in Canada.

In fact, this is a government that stands behind youth. We are creating jobs for youth. One of the things we are doing right now is investing in our union, training and innovation programs, supporting 1,800 trades jobs in the B.C. construction industry, 350 new Red Seal bricklayers at the Ontario Masonry Training Centre and 2,000 sheet metal apprentices and journeypersons through Canada's Building Trades Unions.

These are the kinds of serious actions that we are taking as part of our plan to get youth working.

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal Prime Minister, the immigration system is more out of control than ever before.

The Prime Minister claims that student numbers are down, but last year alone, under the Liberal Prime Minister, there were over 240,000 permits issued, compared to 187,000 in 2015 before the Liberals dramatically expanded Canada's immigration policies. That is not sustainable.

Youth unemployment is 14% across Canada, even higher in London. Canadian youth cannot find jobs.

Why will the Liberals not take accountability for their immigration failures?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I

have already gone over the achievements of the government on the immigration file. We will continue that work.

Furthermore, Conservatives have a tendency, unfortunately, to count permits and not people. They will count the original permit that is issued and then the renewal, so a double counting often happens. As far as creative math is concerned, we will put that aside.

Conservatives have mentioned time and again today the temporary foreign worker program. I will inform my hon. colleague, and his leader as well if he wishes to hear it, that quietly, when they have not been watching the leader's office, Conservatives have in fact been advocating for the temporary foreign worker program in their ridings.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us bring it a bit closer to home for the member. In London, Ontario, an immigration expert called the Liberals' immigration levels "explosive and reckless." Someone else said, "They don't care what will happen with this many students coming in, how they will find a home, how they can find health care. But it's just about numbers, right?"

What happened? We saw health care in London strained and rents increased by over 20%.

My question for my colleague is this: How can he defend the people who are in cabinet, who caused this problem in his hometown, while he is not?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, personal attacks again speak for themselves. I am honoured to work with every single member of caucus who time and again devotes themselves to their constituency.

As far as London or any Canadian community is concerned, we continue to see immigration as a fundamental building block in this country. Of course, transformations and policy are needed. That is exactly what we are devoted to. Service has been strained. We know that, but the numbers are coming down and will continue to come down. We see sustainability in the system, and we will continue that work.

• (1455)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the role of a member of Parliament is to hold the government to account. The member for London Centre had the responsibility to go to his cabinet colleagues and tell them that too many people were coming in too fast, rents in his city were increasing too fast, people could not get health care, student food banks were being overrun and people could not get mental health supports, but he did not. He is standing here today and defending the people in cabinet who made these decisions for which there has been no accountability.

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Can the member just say that the government was wrong? Can he just say that he should never defend the people who created a dumpster fire?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives want to talk about past policy, that is their prerogative.

What we are focused on, from start to finish, is making sure that this country's present, and especially its future, is on a sustainable footing; that we build this country up; that we focus on the economy; and that we look to the immigration system as one way to make that happen.

I will absolutely defend every colleague on this side of the House, because all of us are devoted, as the Conservatives are, to our constituents and our constituencies. Let us stop playing games. Let us get serious about the future of this country.

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HEALTH

Matt Strauss (Kitchener South—Hespeler, CPC): Mr. Speaker, out of respect for the health minister, I informed her office that I would be asking this question. I hope she respects the House enough to stand and answer it.

The Liberals blew \$250 million on PrescribeIT. That is the same amount they spent on the sponsorship scandal. Taxpayers got nothing for this money. The Liberals are outright cancelling the program, acknowledging that it was a total failure.

Now Liberals are filibustering the health committee to prevent the disclosure of the contracts. Why do they not just let Canadians see the contracts so we can all try to prevent such boondoggles in the future?

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for my colleague across the aisle, but the Conservatives are demonstrating classic obstructionist behaviour from committee. We have seen this. They are distracting from the real work we are doing to improve health care across the country.

Let us set the record straight. The Conservatives voted against health care. They voted against dental care. Most recently, they voted against expanding ERs in hospitals across the country. Canadians can see the difference.

* * *

HOUSING

Amandeep Sodhi (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have more good news. Today our government tabled important legislation to empower our industries and get homes built. We are working to provide affordability, to provide flexibility and to deliver on the dream of everyone: a place to call home.

Can the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure explain to the House the importance of today's legislation?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Develop-

ment Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed today is a very good day for housing in Canada. We are working with all provinces and territories, along with our homebuilding partners, to make housing more affordable and to deliver for Canadians. The funding from the housing supply bill would keep our projects moving, protect Canadian workers and support construction. This is for the months and years ahead.

We are investing in affordability in our housing and in the Canadians whom we need to support right now. There is a lot more work to do, but today is a great day.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Pacific salmon are a public resource owned by all Canadians, not something for the Liberal government to eliminate behind closed doors.

For generations, salmon have been managed as a common property resource for the collective benefit of all Canadians, yet the Liberal government is now considering removing that principle from the salmon allocation policy. The Minister of Fisheries refuses to commit to protecting B.C.'s vital recreational fishing industry.

With only five days left to make a decision, I ask the minister to confirm that Canadians will retain their meaningful public right to fish, or will the Liberals once again turn their backs on coastal communities, recreational fishers and our way of life?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Pacific salmon will remain a shared public resource managed by the federal government.

There have been extensive public consultations on the policy, and working group tables continue and include representatives from sport and recreation, commercial harvesters and first nations. A revised salmon allocation policy will not take away any sector's access to the resource. To suggest otherwise is wrong, and it actually divides Canadians.

● (1500)

Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's fisheries resources do belong to the people of Canada. The fisheries minister confirmed this last October when I asked her at the fisheries committee. However, the minister's department has recklessly published a proposal that would eliminate this principle, and Canadians are paying the price for the uncertainty it has caused.

Was the minister's statement at committee more Liberal bait and switch, or will she reaffirm that Canada's fisheries resources belong to the people of Canada?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly the opposition member did not hear me, so let me repeat that Pacific salmon will remain a shared public resource managed by the federal government. There have been extensive public consultations on the policy and working group tables continue. That includes representation from sport and recreational groups, first nations and the commercial sector. A revised salmon allocation policy will not take away anyone's access to the resource. To suggest otherwise is wrong and divides Canadians.

Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the minister is tired of hearing from Canadians, but Conservatives will not stop raising their voices on their behalf.

We recognize that the salmon allocation policy must be aligned with the Ahousaht decision. No one is disputing that in the policy's review, but why is the minister's department floating the proposal to go far beyond, and proposing to sink over 9,000 jobs in B.C. by gutting the public fisheries' access to chinook and coho salmon?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is incorrect. Let me repeat: Pacific salmon will remain a shared resource managed by the federal government. There have been extensive public consultations on the policy, and working group tables continue that include representations from the sport and recreational group, first nations and the commercial sector. A revised salmon allocation policy will not take away any sector's access to the resource, and to continue this argument is to continue to divide Canadians.

* * *

CANADIAN IDENTITY AND CULTURE

Lori Idlout (Nunavut, Lib.): *Uqaqtittiji*, March 31 will be National Indigenous Languages Day. Our government acknowledges that indigenous languages must be celebrated and supported.

We have more great news. The additional \$17.2 million towards national Aboriginal broadcasting will go a long way. More indigenous peoples will preserve their cultures by showcasing their stories.

Could the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages share how this will impact Nunavut—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages.

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her tireless work for Nunavummiut and for the north generally.

Last week I had the chance to visit a number of indigenous broadcasters across the north to see the amazing work they are doing to revitalize the language, to broadcast their people and their languages. That is why I topped up the aboriginal broadcasting envelope that we have at Canadian Heritage by \$17 million, just to make sure that those often small organizations doing amazing work can continue to do that amazing work.

Oral Questions

Just in Nunavut, the member's riding, we announced \$4 million, including \$2.5 million for the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation. Keeping Inuktitut—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills North.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Parliament recognized, with Liberal MPs supporting, that a genocide, including forced labour, was taking place against the Uyghurs in Xinjiang province in the PRC. In response, the Liberal government imposed sanctions. Today, a Liberal member of Parliament in committee intimated in questioning Margaret McCuaig-Johnston, a former PCO official, that there was and is no Uyghur forced labour.

I have two questions. First, does the government still assess that Uyghur forced labour has taken place? Second, will the sanctions remain in place?

● (1505)

Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and to the Secretary of State (International Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be absolutely clear to all members of this House: Forced labour is unacceptable. We must ensure that our global supply chains remain free from these abuses. That is why we prioritize the inclusion of comprehensive labour provisions and free trade agreements to promote international labour standards. We also work with Public Safety to reduce forced labour from our supply chains, and we will protect Canada's interests while upholding labour standards from all workers.

* * *

DENTAL CARE

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seniors in my riding are being told they no longer qualify for the Canadian dental care plan because they supposedly have access to private insurance, even when that so-called access is only theoretical, unaffordable or based on plans they opted out of decades ago. Some have already had treatment approved and completed and are now being told they may have to pay the money back.

Why is the government clawing back dental care from seniors who followed the rules and simply cannot afford private dental care coverage?

Routine Proceedings

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member works really tirelessly for his community, and I respect him a lot for that. The Canadian dental care plan has enabled 6 million Canadians to access affordable dental care and saved families \$800 a year. I look forward to working with him to resolve any outstanding issues that he has brought up.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is patting himself on the back about reaching NATO's 2% defence spending target. Budget 2025 saw the Liberals impose a 5% target, \$81 billion, and now the government is promoting its defence procurement strategy as a way to turn Canada into a major arms exporter. This exposes Canada to further undermining international arms trade commitments through existing loopholes without scrutiny.

Will the Prime Minister admit that this new direction demands accountability and commit to a full parliamentary review of Canada's arms export policy?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the House that Canada continues to have the strongest regime when it comes to arms export controls. We will continue to monitor every sale that leaves this country. We will continue to ensure that we have the best corporate social responsibility as we are engaged in peace activities around the world. We will continue to do that. We will never let our eye off that ball.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:08, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Call in the members.

(The House divided on the motion:)

*(Division No. 94)***YEAS**

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Anderson	Anstey
Arnold	Au
Baber	Bailey
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt)
Berthold	Bexte
Bezan	Blanchet

Blanchette-Joncas	Bonin
Borrelli	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cobena
Cody	Cooper
Dancho	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Niagara South)
Dawson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	DeRidder
Deschênes	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Duncan	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)	Falk (Provencher)
Fortin	Gallant
Garon	Gaudreau
Gazan	Généreux
Genius	Gill (Calgary Skyview)
Gill (Brampton West)	Gill (Calgary McKnight)
Gill (Windsor West)	Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Guglielmin
Gunn	Hallan
Hardy	Ho
Hoback	Holman
Jackson	Jansen
Jivani	Johns
Kelly	Khanna
Kibble	Kirkland
Kmiec	Konanz
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kronis	Kuruc
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lawton	Lefebvre
Lemire	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd	Lobb
Mahal	Majumdar
Malette (Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)	Mantle
Martel	May
Mazier	McCauley
McKenzie	McLean (Calgary Centre)
McPherson	Melillo
Menegakis	Moore
Morin	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Perron	Poilievre
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Reynolds
Richards	Roberts
Ross	Rowe
Ruff	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shiplely
Simard	Small
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stevenson	Strahl
Strauss	Stubbs
Thériault	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Uppal	Van Popta
Vien	Vierson
Vis	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh

Business of the House

Williamson

Zimmer— 164

NAYS

Members

Acan
 Ali
 Anandasangaree
 Baker
 Battiste
 Belanger (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River)
 Bittle
 Brière
 Carr
 Chagger
 Chang
 Chatel
 Chenette
 Church
 Connors
 Coteau
 Dandurand
 d'Entremont
 Desrochers
 Dhillon
 Duclos
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Erskine-Smith
 Fancy
 Fergus
 Fonseca
 Fragiskatos
 Fry
 Gaheer
 Gasparro
 Gould
 Guay
 Gull-Masty
 Hanley
 Hepfner
 Hodgson
 Housefather
 Iacono
 Jaczek
 Joly
 Kayabaga
 Khalid
 Koutrakis
 Lambropoulos
 Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)
 Lattanzio
 Lavack
 LeBlanc
 Lightbound
 Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
 MacDonald (Malpeque)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 McKelvie
 McKnight
 Ménard
 Michel
 Miller
 Morrissey
 Naqvi
 Nguyen
 Ntumba
 Olszewski
 Osborne
 Powlowski
 Ramsay

Al Soud
 Alty
 Bains
 Bardeesy
 Beech
 Bendayan
 Blois
 Carney
 Casey
 Champagne
 Chartrand
 Chen
 Chi
 Clark
 Cormier
 Dabrusin
 Danko
 Deschênes-Thériault
 Dhaliwal
 Diab
 Duguid
 Earle
 El-Khoury
 Eyolfson
 Fanjoy
 Fisher
 Fortier
 Fraser
 Fuhr
 Gainey
 Gerretsen
 Grant
 Guilbeault
 Hajdu
 Harrison
 Hirtle
 Hogan
 Hussien
 Idlout
 Jeneroux
 Joseph
 Kelloway
 Klassen
 Lalonde
 Lamoureux
 Lapointe (Sudbury)
 Lauzon
 Lavoie
 Leitão
 Long
 Ma
 MacDonald (Cardigan)
 Malette (Bay of Quinte)
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McLean (Esquimalt—Saanic—Sooke)
 Mendès
 Miedema
 Mingarelli
 Myles
 Nathan
 Noormohamed
 Oliphant
 O'Rourke
 Petitpas Taylor
 Provost
 Rana

Robertson

Royer

Saini

Sari

Schiefke

Sheehan

Sodhi

Sousa

Tesser Derksen

Turnbull

van Koeverden

Villeneuve

Weiler

Yip

Zerucelli

Romanado

Sahota

Sarai

Sawatzky

Sgro

Sidhu (Brampton South)

Solomon

St-Pierre

Thompson

Valdez

Vandenbeld

Watchorn

Wilkinson

Zahid

Zuberi— 164

PAIRED

Members

Anand

Bonk

Greaves

Rochefort

Sidhu (Brampton East)

Block

Dalton

Plamondon

Rood

Sudds— 10

● (1520)

And the result of the vote having been announced: Yeas, 164; Nays, 164

The Speaker: The House has heard the Clerk announce an equality of votes for and against the motion. It is therefore my duty in these circumstances to exercise the casting vote. I should make it clear that I am casting my vote on purely procedural grounds. In accordance with precedent, that is, decisions made by my predecessors in similar circumstances, and since no further discussion on the matter is possible, I will cast my vote against the motion in order to allow the House to preserve the possibility that the matter might somehow be before the House again in the future, to be decided by a majority of members.

[*Translation*]

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

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it being Thursday, it is time for the Thursday question.

Before we go back to our constituencies to engage in important constituency work and to spend time with our friends and family over the Easter break, I want to wish everybody across Canada a very blessed and meaningful Good Friday. Of course, I am looking forward to the wonderful news of our Lord's resurrection on Easter Sunday, something that brings Canadians together from coast to coast, from all different cultures and backgrounds.

Government Orders

However, before we break, I would like the government to give us an update as to what we will be dealing with when we come back after those two constituency work weeks and whether or not there will be any legislation introduced in the House to repeal the industrial carbon tax, which is driving out investment in Canada's energy sector and contributing to the collapse in the fall of the Canadian dollar, which is, of course, a big culprit in the rising prices that Canada faces.

• (1525)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to join with my hon. colleague a little bit in advance, as it is only, of course, a week from now, to wish all hon. colleagues, and indeed all Canadians, a happy Easter.

[*Translation*]

I wish all members two safe and productive weeks in their ridings.

[*English*]

As to the industrial carbon tax, the member well knows that it cannot possibly be preventing investment, as Canada has achieved record outputs of oil and gas exports. Boats are now floating to Asian markets with our energy products, thereby increasing returns to Canadians and Canadian workers. That is, of course, good news.

[*Translation*]

When we return from the Easter break, priority will be given to Bill C-22, an act respecting lawful access, and Bill C-25, the strong and free elections act, which was introduced this morning.

[*English*]

Tuesday, April 14, shall be an allotted day.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I wish you and all the House staff a joyous and happy Easter.

The Speaker: I wish the same to all members.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

AN ACT RESPECTING CYBER SECURITY

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-8, An Act respecting cyber security, amending the Telecommunications Act and making consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise at third reading of Bill C-8, a very important bill. We agree with the government and with all members of the House that we needed a bill on cybersecurity.

We took the necessary time to debate this bill over a number of sittings. We heard from a number of witnesses and experts, and there was no filibustering by the Conservatives, the Bloc or the Liberals. No one filibustered. Why? It is because everyone agreed that

this is an important bill and that it was important to improve it through a series of amendments.

The Conservative Party put forward amendments, the Bloc Québécois put forward amendments and even the government made amendments to its own bill. We even adopted an amendment proposed by a non-recognized party, because it made sense and improved the bill.

What exactly is Bill C-8? The bill is divided into two parts. Part 1 amends the Telecommunications Act to strengthen security by authorizing the government to direct Internet service providers to do or not do certain things that are necessary to secure the entire Canadian telecommunications system.

Part 2 of the bill creates a new act, the critical cyber systems protection act, which would provide a framework for the protection of critical cyber-infrastructure and companies under federal jurisdiction. When it tabled Bill C-8, the government expected us to pass it with little or no debate, considering that it was a carbon copy of Bill C-26, which had gone through the entire legislative process in the previous Parliament and died on the Order Paper in the Senate.

However, we in the Bloc Québécois have a very influential and conscientious House leader, and she refused. She said that we absolutely had to be able to debate Bill C-8 because we had a new perspective and because time had passed. More importantly, during the debate on Bill C-26, almost all of our amendments were defeated because of the deal between the NDP and the Liberals. Even though our proposed amendments to Bill C-26 made sense, they were defeated quite easily, because the NDP had agreed to that bill.

As fate would have it, we began debating Bill C-8 with a completely new perspective and, most importantly, in a new political context where the Bloc Québécois held the balance of power in committee. The Bloc used this power judiciously and rigorously, in a professional manner. Our goal was to come up with the best bill that would serve Quebec's interests, and so much the better if it served the interests of all other Canadians as well.

I will give some examples. In Bill C-26, all of the recommendations made by Electricity Canada were rejected. Some of them dealt with Hydro-Québec and the importance of respecting Quebec's jurisdictions, including that of Hydro-Québec. Hydro-Québec manages a hydroelectric network and an electricity transmission system that crosses provincial and U.S. borders, and it was already meeting very demanding and strict security regulations. All of a sudden, with Bill C-8, it found itself in a situation where the federal government could decide everything without consulting the provinces or Quebec, even though officials and the party opposite were telling us that they would consult. As we know, for the federal government, consultation often means making decisions and consulting afterward.

In committee, we wanted to make sure that Electricity Canada's recommendations were heard properly. Obviously, we proposed an amendment that addressed its concerns, which were the same as ours, and that amendment was adopted. We were very pleased that a number of Bloc Québécois amendments were adopted.

● (1530)

One in particular was very important to me. We had one witness, Mr. Lefebvre, who explained why encryption is so important. I do not know how well-versed my colleagues are in digital and technological matters, but encryption is a central element of all digital systems. Basically, it is a security technique that makes readable information unreadable to any unauthorized person. Only people with the right key can decrypt the information and understand it. Encryption is used to protect sensitive information, such as messages, passwords and banking information. It is used in online communications, such as email, secure websites and some messaging apps, like WhatsApp, for example. Messages and calls are encrypted end to end.

We explored this part of Bill C-8 in depth because we had no guarantee that the government would lower its encryption criteria given that it was so vulnerable to cyber-attacks just then. There was also potential for abuse due to easier access to conversations people could have on social media apps. The government listened to our concerns and those of the witnesses and put forward its own amendment, which made it crystal clear that there would be no changes to encryption. The Bloc Québécois had presented a similar amendment. We all agreed that there was a line we would not cross. By putting it right there in the bill, encryption is now protected.

We heard from some very good witnesses. We also heard from the Privacy Commissioner, who was surprised to find that Bill C-8 lacked consistency regarding three key criteria for accessing privileged information or sharing sensitive intelligence. He was concerned that the criteria of necessity, proportionality and reasonableness were not fully specified in the bill. They were included in some sections, but not in others.

We in the Bloc Québécois took the Privacy Commissioner's testimony very seriously, and we proposed amendments to ensure that, if sensitive information is shared, it is analyzed based on the criteria of necessity, proportionality and reasonableness before access is granted. Quite frankly, we will have to revisit these three criteria when we study Bill C-22, which provides legal access to information. We will ensure that these three criteria are included in the legislation, as they are important when it comes to accessing information and, above all, sharing it with various stakeholders.

We also supported amendments that were prepared by our Conservative colleagues. Unfortunately, those amendments were ruled out of order by the Speaker of the House. That is a shame, because they would have made it necessary to obtain a mandate to make regulations, which would prevent the minister from having too much power. I am worried, and I will always point out that the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA, is the only monitoring agency for Canada's intelligence services and the RCMP. It is the only agency with a mandate to monitor those agencies to see whether they are complying with the law. In other words, are they abusing their powers or sharing information? Are

Government Orders

they dealing with private information beyond what the law allows them to do?

Basically, ruling the Conservatives' amendment out of order gives the ministers more power. At the same time, the government decided to cut NSIRA's funding by 15%, which amounts to about eight positions, including lawyers, analysts and investigators. This means that ministers and public servants would have more power but NSIRA would have less power and fewer tools.

We were therefore disappointed to see that, despite cutting \$2.7 million from NSIRA's \$17-million budget, the government chose not to support the amendments from the Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party, and the Speaker ruled them inadmissible today. This made us somewhat suspicious, given that the only office with an oversight function is having its budget cut by 15%. That is 15% of \$17 million. It may not seem like much, but when we look at what it represents in terms of jobs at NSIRA, it is quite a lot.

● (1535)

We also listened to the workers who are part of the Canadian Telecommunications Workers Alliance, because they have expressed serious concerns regarding Bill C-8, particularly with regard to whistle-blowers. If someone observes misuse, practices that violate the law or improper use of access to information—including sensitive information—and decides to report it, what could happen to them? After hearing their testimony, the Bloc Québécois introduced an amendment aimed at protecting whistle-blowers who wish to report suspected wrongdoing. We are quite proud of that.

We are working with various witnesses. Just because a witness expresses an opinion or presents facts regarding a bill does not mean we have to accept everything they say. However, in the case of telecommunications workers, their explanations allowed us to tweak the bill, right up to the very last minute. The Conservatives, Liberals and the Bloc all agreed to incorporate their proposals.

Unfortunately, the chair rejected my amendment today. We realized that whistle-blowers were protected under part 1, but not under the new law, part 2. We attempted to introduce an amendment, citing the need for consistency. Unfortunately, it was rejected.

Government Orders

However, we are holding out hope for the time when the legislation will be reviewed, since another Bloc Québécois amendment has been tabled. This is such an important piece of legislation. Technology, cyber-attacks and cybersecurity are evolving so quickly, including artificial intelligence. We adopted an amendment requiring a review of the legislation and its benefits, strengths and weaknesses in five years so that it can be adjusted as needed. This Bloc Québécois amendment was adopted unanimously by all members, and we are happy with it. When it comes to the whistle-blowers covered by part 2 of the bill, perhaps we can take another shot at including whistle-blower protection during the next review.

I think that the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security did an exceptional and exemplary job in reviewing Bill C-8. I felt like I should pat myself on the back a little, because the Liberals often say that opposition members are obstructing proceedings. Earlier, during his speech on Bill C-8, a member of the committee said that we had done a good job. That is because we wanted to have the best bill possible. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives, just like the Bloc and the NDP, helped improve the bill. That is the beauty of democracy. If the opposition is strong and thorough, ultimately, it is the citizens who benefit, because the bill ends up even better.

In the time I have left, I would like to thank our chair, who masterfully led the committee's work; the vice-chair and member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola; as well as the parliamentary secretary and member for La Prairie—Atateken. I also want to thank our clerk, Mr. Cardegna. Our wonderful analysts, Alexandra and Sabrina, did an exemplary job, as did our legislative adviser, Marie. Finally, I would like to acknowledge our interpreters, who were always present in person to support us.

● (1540)

I also want to thank Maxime Duchesne, the Bloc Québécois researcher. He is an extraordinary researcher. I want to thank my assistant Racim and the people who work for the House leader of the Bloc Québécois. They supported us, studied the amendments with us and helped us decide where we stood on our colleagues' amendments.

I also want to thank the people who work for the Bloc Québécois's chief whip, who help us at all of our meetings. We engaged in a lot of negotiations during the debate on Bill C-8's clauses. Every staffer for every party whip was there because the goal was to reach an agreement and compromise to make sure Bill C-8 was the best bill it could be.

This is not something we hear a lot, and it certainly does not make headlines, but this bill is the product of constructive, collaborative work. Bill C-8 will be good for Quebec because the Bloc Québécois protected Quebec's interests. There is a Canadian law that is going through the legislative process, and it will be even better.

I want to sincerely thank everyone for working so hard to achieve the results we achieved. Contrary to what we hear too often from the Liberal government and its members, it is not true that the opposition filibusters. Just because we disagree and propose amendments does not mean that we are against a bill. With Bill

C-8, we proved that when we work together for the public good, we can get things done, and done well.

Bill C-8 will continue to wend its way through the legislative process.

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, and I appreciate her approach to this bill, which seeks to strengthen security and cybersecurity. Earlier, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons introduced Bill C-25, which will also touch a little on Internet safety for children and families.

We have talked about deepfakes. I would like my colleague to tell me how she sees these two bills, which will allow us work together on putting more security infrastructure in place for Canadians and Quebeckers.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her kind words and her question.

As a mother and grandmother, I welcome any measure that can really rein in attacks on individuals and their integrity in the digital realm.

I wish she had asked me a question about Bill C-22, which is another bill that was introduced before the break. In my opinion, it will require the same rigorous study and the same amount of time for analysis because it is about legal access to personal information.

● (1545)

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question, and I thank her for her excellent grasp of the subject. My question may stray from the subject and be more institutional, given that my colleague herself talked about the power of the opposition parties and the constructive work we can do.

I had a similar experience at one of the committees I serve on. We studied Bill C-11 on sexual misconduct in the military, and most of the amendments passed with the joint support of the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois. In my view, the point of a parliamentary system is that it is not the government that has the last word, but rather Parliament. However, it was the democratic process that determined there would be more opposition members. It is therefore only natural that the opposition parties' combined positions on a bill should win out.

Does my colleague not find it frustrating when amendments adopted by a majority of members representing the makeup of the House are rejected outright by the Speaker?

Government Orders

Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, that is indeed a problem, considering the work and analysis that goes into amendments. These amendments had been thoroughly debated by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, and though they were deemed inadmissible by the committee chair, we had strong arguments to show that the chair was mistaken. Democracy prevailed, and we overturned the chair's decision. It is regrettable that, despite the debates we had in committee, the Speaker of the House has this additional power to overturn the committee's decision.

I believe these rules should be revisited because it does not make sense that, in the context of a minority government, the Speaker of the House had the final say on Bill C-8 after it was thoroughly debated in committee.

[*English*]

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, it was a true pleasure working with my colleague on the public safety committee. I want to talk about one particular area where we worked together to improve the legislation.

Often, we have seen, when passing new or novel legislation that would give the government new powers, we put in review clauses to ensure that, after a specified period of time, usually five years, we could review the legislation to make sure that it is working as intended. Unfortunately, we have seen many pieces of legislation passed for which these reviews have never taken place.

I am very proud that I was able to work on what was initially brought forward by my colleague to try to strengthen that, to ensure that the government has to complete a review. It cannot just keep kicking the can down the road. I want to know what the member's thoughts are on that particular amendment.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for being a paragon of collaboration. He is one of my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, and when I tabled my amendment, he came to see me and said that if we added what he just mentioned to the amendment, the government would be subject to more oversight and would have less time to present the analysis and report.

There was a minor flaw in the wording of my amendment, a minor weakness that would have allowed the government to keep discussing the bill beyond five years. My colleague improved it by moving a subamendment. Honestly, I really appreciated his subamendment, which was adopted by all members of the committee, including those on the government side. I just want to say that when we work as a team and our objective is clear, straightforward, precise, positive and constructive, namely, to protect the public and offer security, then amendments and subamendments are welcome. That is what my colleague did.

• (1550)

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon. I am a member of the House, but I am not a member of a committee.

I want to add a few words to support the position of my colleague and friend from the Bloc Québécois, because it is not just

the majority of the committee members who accepted the amendments. There are also two other parties in the House whose members cannot vote in committee. The NDP member for Vancouver East and myself, from the Green Party, also agree with the changes that were made by the committee following clause-by-clause consideration but that were ruled out of order by the Speaker of the House. I simply want to add that I think the majority, plus two other members, agree that the bill should be improved.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I understand my colleague's frustration because, at the end of the day, she has just as much right to be here in the House as I do. Her voice carries just as much weight as mine and those of all our colleagues in the House. However, it is true that the rules in committee are such that unrecognized parties are not represented around the table during committee deliberations. My colleague was able to introduce her amendments but was not able to debate or vote on them. I understand her frustration. There are many rules in the House that need to be reviewed and many things that need to be modernized. The point is that we need to take the time to do so. Here in the House of Commons, amending the rules has not exactly been commonplace since I was first elected. I understand her frustration and I empathize with her concerns, but this is a broad debate that we could perhaps have a little later, in the context of other bills.

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague very much for her speech and for walking us through the legislative process. I have a question for her. Can she inform the House about the balance that we struck between the imperative need to protect our facilities from cyber-attacks and the need to avoid compromising people's privacy, particularly when Internet service providers are allowed to do certain things?

How does Bill C-8 strike a balance between these two important principles?

Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, who always asks very relevant questions. Indeed, that is what motivated us throughout our work in committee. In other words, when we analyzed Bill C-8, we wondered how we could both ensure security and protect privacy and personal information.

I think we achieved that. It is not perfect, but I think we achieved that by incorporating the amendments proposed by the Privacy Commissioner and by adding the analysis criteria, namely necessity, proportionality and reasonableness. That gives us some assurance. Before anyone gets access, they have to be screened. Those criteria have to be recorded, observed and documented before someone can get access or issue orders.

We think that the requirement to go through this screening offers some security around the whole issue of confidentiality and privacy.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak to Bill C-8 this afternoon.

Government Orders

I have a few comments regarding the substance of the bill, but in light of the previous speeches, I think I can clarify the situation regarding unrecognized parties, although it is a bit complicated.

[English]

The reality of it is that we do not have to change our rules, but I share with my other colleagues that we have the right, as members of Parliament in parties with fewer than 12 MPs, under our standing rules and procedures of Parliament to stand in this place at report stage and present and debate substantive amendments. That is as a right, not as a favour on unanimous consent. That right we have at report stage is one that exists in our rules.

Why it does not happen goes back to a long story, and I do not want to lose my time to discuss Bill C-8 by explaining this. Back when Stephen Harper was the prime minister, the governing party objected to my efforts to try to protect environmental legislation in an omnibus budget bill in the spring of 2012. I presented amendments on the floor of the House at report stage. Long story short, the Prime Minister's Office of the day decided it was too much trouble to change the rules to deprive members of Parliament in a situation such as my own, which is now a situation the NDP finds itself in. Not long ago in the past, the Bloc Québécois was in the same situation.

Rather than change the rules, they came up with a simple expedient: Tell every committee to pass an identical motion to say members of Parliament serving in a party of fewer than 12 MPs or as independents would be given a short timeline of 24 hours' notice to present amendments at committee which are deemed to have been tabled. This was because, as non-committee members, we do not have the right to argue for our amendments, except during a one-minute period. We also do not have the right to withdraw our amendments, but the deemed presentation of our amendments occurs.

I have spent days in committees at clause-by-clause, waiting hours for the one chance I have to present one amendment and argue for it for a minute.

This is all to say that this process, in the case of Bill C-8, gave me a front-row seat to really good, strong attempts by Conservative members of Parliament, by the Bloc Québécois, by one NDP member in the same situation I am in and by a number of Green Party amendments that were put forward to try to improve the act. It is worth noting at this point that it represents four of the five parties that serve in this Parliament, working together to try to improve the legislation, with the governing party members opposing.

Even though we got through committee a number of strong amendments, at the end of the day, here in this chamber, an *ex post facto* change was made to the rulings that the majority of the committee members who had a vote, and, if we had had a vote, the other members of Parliament who were sitting at the table and presenting amendments, would have concurred in.

It is a strange road that leads me to every single committee on almost every piece of legislation when it gets to clause-by-clause to try to improve the legislation. As a right, I should not have to run from committee to committee. I should be able to make my amend-

ments at report stage in one room, rather than sometimes simultaneously running from committee to committee.

I raise this because members of committee now routinely pass a motion sent down to them from on high. They do not question it or realize that what they are doing is reducing my rights as a member of Parliament. I have more rights if they do not pass that motion in committee, but it is now a mindless procedure. They never call me beforehand to ask how it would affect my rights or if they should pass it or not.

● (1555)

[Translation]

Unfortunately, this is the situation facing members of parties with fewer than 12 seats. We are only allowed to present amendments at report stage, here in the House.

The House is now considering Bill C-8 at third reading. Bill C-8, which we are debating in the House this afternoon, is virtually identical to Bill C-26, but it includes certain improvements that were made to that bill, which could not be passed because the House was prorogued.

[English]

We know that Bill C-26 was the first attempt to have a cybersecurity framework for this country to protect Canadians and be prepared for the numerous ways in which we need a proper framework for cybersecurity. Bill C-8 is an improvement over Bill C-26. There is more transparency. Improvements have been made, and there is more clarity around the question of what is essential infrastructure for Canadians in this area.

Bill C-8 is an omnibus bill that would create an entirely new act, the critical cyber-systems protection act, and amend many other acts. As much as we can stand here and say it is an improvement, it is also an improvement because at least some of the amendments that were made in clause-by-clause in committee, amendments primarily from the Conservative Party members of committee, improved the legislation and did more to protect privacy for Canadians. However, still, despite some improvements that we welcome, I will be voting against Bill C-8 because there are still too many loopholes and too many flaws.

I am quite certain of the bill's passage, and we do need legislation in this area, but not this. We are not ready yet. I very much hope that the Senate of Canada, in exercising sober second thought, will look at the debates here today and consider the briefs that were presented to the public safety committee from the Canadian Civil Liberties Union; the Citizen Lab, which is part of the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy; OpenMedia; and a number of other concerned technical expert groups that, while looking at cybersecurity, think that this bill still has flaws that would create constitutional weaknesses and fail to properly protect encryption and the security of private information.

The concerns fall into a couple of broad categories. Again, when the Senate of Canada looks at this, I would ask it to please consider if the legislation is good enough to pass the tests. Cybersecurity is an interesting area, where Canada, in passing legislation, has an eye on what the U.K. threshold tests looks like for protection of personal information before our products can be used within the U.K. Certainly a number of experts have looked at this and think that Bill C-8 does not get us across the threshold for what privacy protections are required in other countries.

In general, despite improvements in transparency, the reality is that this law, Bill C-8, like other laws passed recently, would give individual ministers too much power. We do not have the requirement for warrants. There is not enough judicial oversight. We still have a situation where many of these orders can be made without the public knowing. The notion is that the minister alone would decide whether they can order a telecommunications company to pull access to their system or an individual Canadian, who will not necessarily know this is happening and not have an opportunity to speak to it.

The ongoing question is not only that this bill has loopholes, but it weakens existing protections that exist under other laws. Those points have been made well. I was going to particularly point to the brief of OpenMedia on Bill C-8, which points out, “A bad loophole you pass in this legislation does not just weaken the law; it will prove far more important than the law's intended purpose.” There are serious loopholes that must be fixed, and they have not been fixed. I certainly hope that the Senate will look at the Bloc Québécois amendment, which would make sure there is mandatory review of how this law is working within a confined and defined period of time.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, it is clear that this bill is imperfect. No member of Parliament believes that the bill has been improved enough to make it perfect now.

[*English*]

We cannot let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Let us hope that the Senate fixes the flaws, that the bill comes back to us and that the government accepts those fixes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

• (1605)

[*English*]

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

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Hon. Arielle Kayabaga: Madam Speaker, I request that it be passed on division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find consent to see the clock at 5:42 p.m., so we can start Private Members' Business.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

ADDRESSING THE CONTINUING VICTIMIZATION OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS' FAMILIES ACT

The House resumed from November 21, 2025, consideration of the motion that Bill C-236, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and the Prisons and Reformatories Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians expect their government to take a firm and unambiguous stance against violent crime.

Today, I rise to speak to Bill C-236, the addressing the continuing victimization of homicide victims' families act. I acknowledge the intentions of the hon. member for Parkland, as well as his advocacy for victims of crime. In this spirit, we support sending Bill C-236 to committee for further study.

Despite this, in its current form, the bill falls short of delivering the decisive, concrete measures needed to confront violent offenders and to protect victims and their families. We look forward to working collaboratively to improve the bill to better the safety of all Canadians.

I want to assure the member and Canadians that our government takes the rights of victims and the parole process seriously. Bill C-236 would make an offender's failure to disclose the location of victims' remains a consideration in sentencing and parole decisions. The bill would also require courts to order the parole ineligibility period to be one-half of the sentence or 10 years, whichever is less, unless the court is satisfied that the default period outlined in the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the CCRA, is sufficient.

Private Members' Business

Victims and their families deserve strong, reliable protections. The intent of Bill C-236 is understandable: to support victims' families and hold offenders accountable for withholding the location of victims' remains. However, we do not believe that the bill in its current form, without changes, will meaningfully improve our criminal justice system or make our communities safer.

I will explain. What I mean is that this bill does not enhance public safety outcomes, because the mechanism it is seeking to target, sentencing and parole, is already in place and allows for consideration in sentencing and parole decisions of non-disclosure. Judges are already able to consider any factor surrounding the offence as aggravated when determining sentences and parole eligibility, including the failure to disclose the location of victims' remains. Similarly, in certain circumstances, judges can already delay parole eligibility for the length of time proposed in the bill, which is the lesser of 10 years or half the sentence.

Furthermore, there is nothing in Bill C-236 that would preclude consideration of relevant factors by correctional decision-makers, such as the Parole Board of Canada and Correctional Service Canada. Of additional concern is the fact that the proposed amendments to the parole regime would create confusion and contradiction regarding when an offender may be eligible for parole. This is likely unintended, but the bill would not have the effect of making these parole ineligibility periods longer, nor would it achieve the objective of addressing the continued victimization of homicide victims' families.

Specifically, the bill would create contradictory and shorter periods of parole ineligibility for first- and second-degree murder, resulting in judges' having the choice to pick a shorter parole ineligibility period for these offences. This would mean that if an offender is being reintegrated into communities, they would spend less time under supervised release by Correctional Service Canada, which helps bridge the gap between offenders' being in an institution and reintegrating into society.

With this, I want to take a moment to talk about parole and, specifically, the decision-making process, the rights and supports available for victims, and how parole contributes to the protection of society. The majority of offenders are serving fixed-length sentences. This means they will eventually be released back into the community once their sentence ends. Evidence shows that parole contributes to public safety by helping offenders reintegrate into society through a gradual, structured and supported release.

Parole decisions are made by the Parole Board of Canada, which is an independent administrative tribunal that operates at arm's length from the government and free from outside influence. The decisions of the Parole Board, for which public safety is the primary consideration, are based on a thorough risk assessment, which considers all relevant and available information. To be clear, this includes information from victims of crime, the police, courts, Crown attorneys, mental health professionals, correctional authorities and private agencies.

Importantly, the nature and gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender are also factors considered in parole decisions. While parole is meant to be a bridge between incarceration and safe integration into the community, I must stress that

just because an offender is eligible for parole does not mean the parole is granted. If the Parole Board of Canada deems an offender poses a risk to public safety, parole is denied.

● (1610)

Even when an offender is granted parole, they are not released into our communities without oversight. They remain under the legal custody of Correctional Service Canada and are subject to strict supervision, mandatory conditions and continuous monitoring by community parole officers. Parole is structured, and it is an enforceable tool that ensures offenders are held accountable throughout their reintegration. There are immediate consequences if they fail to comply. If, at any time, offenders breach their conditions, their release may be revoked by the Parole Board of Canada and they can be returned to an institution.

Importantly, the parole process also establishes a role for victims, where their input and concerns are factors that are considered in conditional release decision-making. To be clear, under the law, the definition of a victim includes not only those harmed directly, but also the family of deceased victims. Any victim may register to receive information from the Parole Board of Canada and Correctional Service Canada. They may also provide information to the Parole Board of Canada at any time related to safety concerns, the offender's risk to reoffend and/or the effect the crime has had on them, their family or the community.

Victims can also choose to provide a statement detailing the impact the offence has had on them, and they may attend parole hearings as observers. Victims may present a written statement to the board members that outlines the continuing impact of the offence, as well as any risk or safety concerns the offender may pose. They can request that special conditions be considered for an offender's release. While victims have a role in the criminal justice system, the Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that their voices continue to be heard and its policies are responsive to their concerns while seeking to not overburden or retraumatize.

In 2015, the Government of Canada created the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. This provides victims of crime with the right to information, protection, participation and seeking restitution. The government will always take the protection of these rights seriously and will look for opportunities to enhance and build upon them. As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, while the government supports this bill being sent to committee, we are always prepared to support other measures that would meaningfully and concretely support victims of crime and deliver public safety results for all Canadians.

An example of this is when our government introduced Bill C-16, the protecting victims act, which proposes measures to enhance victim safety, participation and access to information by addressing gaps in how and when victims are informed about an offender's status and parole decisions. Proximity to a victim would be included as a factor in institution selection, and victims would have access to information about why parole hearings were postponed.

The government has also tabled Bill C-14, the bail and sentencing reform act. This legislation would target crimes committed by violent and repeat offenders, and would include amendments to the Criminal Code that would establish reverse onus bail for major crimes; allow consecutive sentencing for multiple crimes, meaning longer times behind bars; impose harsher penalties for organized retail theft; and restrict conditional sentences for a number of sexual offences.

In parallel to these legislative pieces, the government is continuing its work with provinces, territories and local enforcement to address the root causes of crime. We are acting decisively to keep our communities safe by investing in violence prevention programs and cracking down on cross-border smuggling of guns, fentanyl and other drugs. This is an opportunity for all of us to stand against crime and support victims of crime.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Natural Resources.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, first and foremost, it is important for me to express my full support tonight for “Le communautaire à boutte” movement. Before becoming an MP, I served as executive director of the Hautes-Laurentides community development corporation for over five years. I worked closely with more than 50 organizations that provide services that government agencies cannot. These are dedicated people. I commend the organizations that have been around for 40 years. I will name a few: La Griffé d'Alpha, Maison Lyse-Beauchamp for the homeless, L'Arche du Nord, La Petite Mission, and Maison de la Famille du Nord. There are so many of them and they are part of our social fabric. Our regions need them, and this is a unique model that Quebec has developed over the decades. I stand with them wholeheartedly in ensuring that services for the vulnerable are not interrupted in the future.

Private Members' Business

Today, we are discussing Bill C-236. The Bloc Québécois will be voting in favour of the bill because we want to study it in committee. It is a Conservative Party bill that is at second reading stage. I should mention, however, that the bill may be unnecessary. Let me explain. The case cited by the Conservative Party to justify this bill shows that the Parole Board of Canada already takes account of refusals to disclose the location of a victim's body and refusals to admit guilt.

In fact, Australia since 2015, the United Kingdom since 2019 and the United States since 2021 have had similar legislation in some of their federated states, although studies suggest that these laws are unnecessary and even violate certain rights of inmates, in addition to transforming the goal of the parole system from rehabilitation to punishment.

As is always the case when the Conservative Party introduces bills related to the justice system, the Conservatives' vision of justice is not justice in the noble sense of the word. All too often, the official opposition wants Canada's justice system to be about revenge.

Not only that, but the parole system already takes certain criteria into account when making its decisions. Once again, the Conservative Party wants the legislative branch to play a role in the administration of justice. Once again, the Conservative Party wants to severely restrict the discretion of the members of the Parole Board of Canada. Once again, the party of law and order wants to control the law.

Nevertheless, setting aside partisan considerations, I want to say that, despite these reservations, I recognize that victims' loved ones deserve answers and that this bill deserves to be studied in committee. This actually allows me to point out that parliamentary committee work is fundamental to demystifying complex issues. My colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon just talked about this in the context of Bill C-8.

It is easy to introduce bills to pander to one's base, but the bill has to pass the smell test and that is what parliamentary committees are for. It is an opportunity to hear from academics and experts on the issues at hand. In this case, that will include families, loved ones, and the Parole Board of Canada, to learn in detail exactly how things work in practice. We need to challenge assumptions and sit down to ensure that the system is working as it should.

• (1620)

That is why the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of the bill, because this matter deserves to be addressed with all the seriousness, diligence, and impartiality that the issue of justice demands.

Private Members' Business

Just two weeks ago, when I rose here to speak to a Conservative Party justice bill, I said that the justice system is under attack throughout the west. It is a tactic employed by the far right and various fringe groups. I have said this on several occasions since becoming a member of Parliament, and that concerns me.

Using the justice system and judges as political tools is a road to nowhere, except to inflate dubious theories. Do we want an American-style system, with all the problems that come with it, or do we want a justice system worthy of the name? I believe and hope that we can all agree on the answer.

Populism is on the rise all over the world. It is a troubling trend. As a member of Parliament, I have made it my mission to stand as a bulwark against populism and to always focus on the facts. I urge my colleagues from all parties to do the same. Let us send this bill to committee and have it studied thoroughly to ensure that it meets our legal principles.

That is why I am saying here today that we need to look at the facts and send the bill to committee.

[English]

Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to support Bill C-236, or McCann's law.

I want to thank my hon. colleague from Parkland for his relentless work in the mission for justice and closure and his support for those victims and their families who have not received a proper burial, which is something that all humans deserve.

I acknowledge the spirit of Lyle and Marie McCann, their family and their never-ending journey to justice and closure. They, among many, have experienced the harshest crimes in our society still to this day.

It is well known that indigenous women and girls also experience a disproportionate, unfair portion of these harsh crimes. Indigenous women and girls make up a small percentage of Canada's population, or roughly 2% to 4%, yet they represent a vastly disproportionate number of victims. Between 2009 and 2021, they accounted for 5% to 7% of all homicide victims. They are six times more likely to be murdered than non-indigenous women, and even more alarming, they are up to 12 times more likely to go missing or be murdered. These are not just numbers. These are mothers, daughters, sisters and loved ones whose absences leave permanent holes in families and communities across the country. The national inquiry heard from over 2,300 witnesses, including survivors and their families, whose courage in sharing their truths laid bare serious gaps in policing, justice and social supports.

As Conservatives, we believe the first responsibility of any government is to protect its citizens, especially the most vulnerable. This means ensuring that indigenous women and girls are safe in their homes, in their communities and across this country. It means supporting practical solutions, better coordination between law enforcement agencies, stronger accountability and improved access to social supports to ensure that families are never left in the dark when tragedy strikes. It also means respecting the calls for justice, not as symbolic gestures but as actionable steps that demand measurable results.

That is what McCann's law would do. It would help take an actionable, meaningful step toward those families of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls who live without closure. While women are disproportionately represented in the murders in this country, this bill would affect all ages and people who are victims.

Just this past year, the murder of Samuel Bird captured the hearts and minds of first nations indigenous peoples and all Canadians around the Edmonton, Alberta, region. Samuel went missing, and his family was desperate, searching an area larger than the city of Toronto for his remains. It was during this search, in looking for actionable, tangible ways to support Samuel's family, that the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs of Alberta took notice of this bill and lent its support. Of course, its priority at the time was the immediate search for Samuel, but the foresight of the chiefs had them looking into a hard future and toward their treaty partner, the Crown and the federal government, for support.

The chiefs took notice of McCann's law, and the 40-plus chiefs across Treaties 6, 7 and 8 passed a resolution that stated:

We support strengthening accountability by requiring offenders convicted of serious crimes to disclose information about the location of victims' remains before parole or sentencing consideration, recognizing its potential to bring closure and healing to families of [missing and murdered indigenous peoples].

These are the chiefs of the families back home in Treaties 6, 7 and 8, and I am proud of my leaders back home for supporting the action that this bill would take. This bill originated in and was written in their home territory of Treaty 6.

Ultimately, in this instance, Samuel's family was granted the small, gracious closure that we all hope for, for all victims: His body was found.

In our culture, our elders teach us that those who are not sent to the spirit world through a proper funeral, protocols and ceremony cannot become our future ancestors to guide us from the spirit world in this life. To this day, there are still victims' families out there who have not received closure. Justice in Canada must put victims first. Circumstances surrounding murderers' paths through the justice system exposes serious flaws in our system, flaws that have left far too many Canadian families re-victimized by a system that often prioritizes offenders over those they harm.

• (1625)

At the heart of this bill is critical reform ensuring that individuals convicted of the most serious violent crimes face tougher sentences and a stronger parole system when they continue to pose a clear risk to public safety. Canadians expect a justice system that is fair but also firm. They expect consequences for murder. They expect that when someone commits murder, they will not have an easy path through their time in the prison system at the victim's expense.

We have seen too many instances of killers considered for parole too early. We have seen families forced to relive the trauma at repeated parole hearings, year after year, uncertain whether justice will truly be served. This is not justice. It is a failure of the system. Bill C-236 would address this by allowing for longer periods between parole hearings in the most serious cases.

This is about giving victims and their families peace of mind. It is about ensuring that dangerous individuals are given the harshest sentences they deserve under Canadian law. It is about restoring confidence in our justice system. From a Conservative perspective, this is straightforward.

First, public safety must always come first. A government's primary duty is to protect its citizens. When someone has demonstrated a pattern of violent behaviour, the risks they pose cannot be minimized or ignored. Strengthening parole criteria in those circumstances is not excessive. It is responsible.

Second, accountability matters. Criminal acts, especially violent ones, must carry real consequences. If sentences are too lenient or parole is granted and considered too easily, we undermine the deterrence effects of our laws. We send the wrong message not only to offenders but to Canadians, who expect the justice system to uphold order and safety.

Third, we must stand with victims. Too often in this country, victims and their families feel like an afterthought. They are asked to attend parole hearings to recount their pain and fight for the continued incarceration of the very individuals who shattered their lives. Bill C-236 recognizes that reality. Limiting unnecessary parole hearings and strengthening denial provisions would reduce the emotional toll placed on families and tell them they would not have to keep reliving this trauma year after year.

Rehabilitation is an important goal, but it cannot come at the expense of safety and justice for victims. Where genuine rehabilitation has occurred, our system already has mechanisms to recognize it, but where it has not, the risk remains high.

Parole must be strongly considered to be denied. Canadians understand this balance. They know compassion for victims and accountability for offenders are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Bill C-236 strikes that balance. It would ensure that those who commit the most serious crimes face consequences that reflect the gravity of their actions. It would ensure that parole is treated not as an entitlement but as a privilege that must be earned, and it would ensure that victims are not forgotten in the process.

Our justice system must be worthy of the trust Canadians place in it. That trust is eroded when violent offenders are considered for

Private Members' Business

release too soon. It is eroded when families feel unheard. It is eroded when accountability is replaced with leniency.

Supporting Bill C-236 is an opportunity to begin restoring trust in our justice system. As Conservatives, we always stand for safer communities, meaningful consequences for crime and a justice system that puts victims first.

As we enter the break as parliamentarians and go into Easter, too many families out there have an empty seat at their table. This bill, while not filling that spot at their table, would certainly help bring closure for those families.

I support this bill. Help us pass it through this House.

• (1630)

Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of Bill C-236, introduced by my colleague and friend the hon. member for Parkland. It is a bill that speaks to something fundamental, not just in our justice system but also in our shared humanity. It is about dignity and accountability, and above all it is about justice for victims and their families.

For most Canadians, when a loved one passes, there is a process. There is mourning, a funeral and a place to visit, to remember and to grieve, but for far too many families, that process is stolen from them. It is stolen by individuals who commit the most horrific crimes imaginable and then choose to withhold the very information that would allow families to lay their loved ones to rest.

Bill C-236 seeks to address this very injustice. It would do so in a targeted, thoughtful and charter-compliant way. It would not remove judicial discretion or impose automatic penalties, and it would not upend the principles of our justice system. Instead, the bill would do something both simple and profoundly important. It would ensure that when an offender refuses to disclose the location of a victim's remains, that refusal would be treated as a serious and relevant factor in sentencing, at parole and in conditional release decisions.

The bill recognizes ongoing harm, because the truth is this: When an offender withholds the location of a victim's remains, the crime does not end at conviction; it continues. It continues every single day that a family is denied answers and every single day that a parent, a child or a sibling is left wondering, "Where are they?"

Private Members' Business

We need only to look at the case that inspired the bill. In 2010, Lyle and Marie McCann were brutally murdered. Their son, Bret, has lived with unimaginable grief, but that grief has been compounded and even intensified because the animal responsible has refused to say where their bodies are. To this day, the McCann family has had no grave to visit, no proper funeral and no true closure. As Bret McCann himself said, by withholding that information, the offender continues to revictimize the family. That is exactly right. That is not silence; it is ongoing harm, yet under our current system, there is no explicit requirement for judges or parole boards to consider that refusal.

While the McCann case is a powerful and tragic example, it is certainly not an isolated one. Across this country, there have been multiple cases where families have been left without answers, and where offenders, even after conviction, refused to disclose the location of remains. In each of these cases, the pain does not end with the trial or sentencing. It continues indefinitely, because the truth is being deliberately withheld. The bill recognizes that this is not a one-off injustice but a recurring gap in our legal system that demands a legislative response. Let me be very clear about what the legislation would do.

At sentencing, a judge would be required to consider an offender's refusal to disclose the location as an aggravating factor. If the judge chooses not to consider it, they must explain why. For serious sentences, those exceeding two years to life, the court may order that full parole eligibility be delayed until half the sentence has been served, or 10 years, whichever is less. Importantly, that order can be revisited if the offender chooses to co-operate. This would create something that does not currently exist: a meaningful incentive to do the right thing, to tell the truth, to provide answers and to allow families to grieve.

The bill would also strengthen the role of the Parole Board. It would make clear that ongoing refusal to disclose the location of remains can be grounds to deny parole.

• (1635)

It would apply as well to temporary absences, including unescorted absences and even certain humanitarian requests, because it is entirely reasonable to ask, "If an offender continues to withhold critical information about a victim, have they truly demonstrated rehabilitation, and have they truly accepted responsibility?" The bill seeks to recognize the consequences of continued deliberate non-cooperation, and it would ensure that our justice system is equipped to respond to that reality.

Some may argue that these factors are already considered informally, but if that is the case, then there should be no hesitation in codifying them. If we already believe this matters, then we should say so clearly in law. The bill has been carefully drafted to respect the charter. It would preserve discretion and avoid automatic penalties, and it would fit squarely within existing legal principles. This is not a sweeping reform. It is not a broad overhaul of sentencing law. It is a targeted, measured response to a very specific and very real problem, and yes, it might apply to only a small number of cases each year, but for those families, those parents, those children and those loved ones, it would mean everything.

Conservatives often speak in this House about putting victims first. We hear that from time to time from the Liberals. This is an opportunity for all of us to do exactly that, to acknowledge victims' pain, validate their experience and take a concrete step to support them. I would urge all members of the House to look beyond politics on this issue, to consider the families who are still waiting for answers, to consider the dignity of those who have been lost, and to consider the very clear message we send if we fail to act.

Justice is not only about what happens in a courtroom. It is about whether families are able to move forward with dignity, with answers, and most importantly, with the truth. When an offender chooses to withhold a location, they are not simply remaining silent. They are prolonging the suffering, and they are extending the harm of their crime day after day, year after year.

The bill would ensure that our justice system recognizes that reality. It is measured, it is charter-compliant, and it is rooted in a simple principle: that victims and their families matter. We have an opportunity to correct a clear and painful gap in our legal system. I urge all members of the House, on all sides, to stand with victims' families, to stand for accountability and to support Bill C-236.

• (1640)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an absolute honour to rise in support of Bill C-236. I want to take a moment to commend my colleague from Parkland not only for his excellent work on this bill, but also for the way that he approached its development. I know that he went out of his way to talk to victims, victims' rights groups and law enforcement to really make this an evidence-based, common-sense approach to a real problem that is happening in Canada. That approach shows the best of what we can be in this place. For that reason, among many others, I am proud to say that I will be supporting this bill, and I know that many others will be as well.

The bill would make a common-sense, long-overdue change to ensure, when a person is convicted of a crime, such as murder or manslaughter, and the offender refuses to provide information about the location of the victim's body or remains, that would be an aggravating factor at sentencing that could lead to a longer or harsher sentence, a reason to delay parole eligibility and a factor considered in decisions about conditional release, temporary absences or other corrections decisions.

My other colleagues in this place have made very good technical arguments about why this law is in alignment with the charter, but I want to make some arguments about why I think it is necessary.

In this place, we all have a responsibility to protect the most vulnerable people in our community, and we have a responsibility to ensure that our laws rectify deficiencies when we see that people are not being protected. There have been several high-profile cases that have been highlighted in colleagues' speeches speaking to this bill. My colleague from Parkland, after speaking to many victims, has also highlighted some of their cases in which a family has endured an unimaginable situation where their loved ones' lives were taken by somebody else and the perpetrator has been convicted of that crime, but the family does not have closure because the remains of their loved one have not been found. We know, through a lot of psychological research and reports, as well as just common sense, that to not have that closure, that ability to say goodbye and put somebody to rest, which is a very important part of a lot of spiritual practices and faiths, is a situation that continues to revictimize the family. We think about the victimization of people when crimes are perpetrated. In this instance, without the location of the remains or of the body of the victim of a murder, their loved ones, their friends and their family, become ongoing victims of crime.

My colleague from Parkland has also highlighted the fact that there are often trigger points for the family throughout the sentence of an offender in these cases. For example, if the offender comes up for parole and there is a parole eligibility issue, all of a sudden the fact that those remains have never been found is once again thrust into the forefront of the family's lives or their friends' lives. To me, that is an ongoing crime. It is an ongoing problem that we in this place should seek to rectify.

There is also something that did not come up in debate that I want to touch on a bit too. There is the dignity that we afford to somebody when they have passed. There is a dignity that somebody who has passed away is afforded, through many faith traditions and many secular traditions as well. To me, to allow an offender who has been convicted of murder to, for example, be eligible for parole when that dignity has not been afforded to their victim is not just.

● (1645)

What this bill would do is give the judiciary and law enforcement officials more tools to ensure that dignity is provided to the victim, but also that the ongoing victimization of their friends and family does not occur, so there can be a sense of closure and peace. Beyond the technicalities of what my colleague presented in this bill, he is also proposing to colleagues in this place that we look at justice a bit differently. To me, he has really thought about what justice means. I really support this bill for that, and because of the compassion, care and kindness he has inserted into its heart and into how he has modelled it.

I also want to address some colleagues, as I have heard them in debate make some reference to this being an American law. This legislation actually has its roots in the Commonwealth tradition. There are similar terms to the "no body, no parole" laws in Australia, as well as in the U.K. In the U.K., the legislation that went through our peer parliament was called Helen's Law. When our peers in those places were arguing about it, they debated the need to have judges, parole boards and correctional authorities. They needed more tools to address the injustice of withheld information.

Private Members' Business

Again, we must go back to the concept of giving additional justice and looking at the holistic situation of the impacts of crime. When speaking about murder, we should have no disagreement in this place that we should be looking for ways to correct and give as much justice in those situations as possible. The concept of the injustice of withheld information means that perpetrators should not be rewarded by being granted parole, for example, when we know that justice is still to be served.

Some debate came up about how this affects only a small number of cases in Canada. To me, there are a lot of logical fallacies involved in that argument. Justice should apply to all. A small number of cases should not be just waved away. There is still a requirement for justice there. If justice is not served in those cases, then it actually normalizes not having justice in those situations, which we can often see leading to recidivism, escalation of crime, or more instances happening. We in this place should be doing our job and holding the government to account to know when there are clear instances of justice not being served, so that we close the loopholes in our laws that should be common sense, in order to make sure that the principle that underlies the foundation of the Canadian national identity, the identity of our country, which is respect for the rule of law and justice when justice is required to be served, is actually embedded.

I hope this law quickly passes for all the reasons I have laid out, the compassionate reasons and the reasons for justice, but also because this precedent exists in Commonwealth peer countries as well. I want to extend a great degree of compassion and empathy to those victims who have worked with my colleague, the member for Parkland, and shared their stories. I hope they get closure by our quickly passing this bill as well.

I would just close by saying there are a lot of deficiencies in Canada's ability to deliver justice. We have seen the government over the last decade err on the side of protecting offenders and criminals, as opposed to providing justice for victims and preventing crime by ensuring that commensurate punishment is levelled to people who break the societal norms that are established in our criminal law. I think that needs to end.

There are a lot of people in the country who are looking beyond the chaos they are seeing in a lot of our streets and are starting to question whether or not we here in this place, as well as the government, understand the concept of justice. That is why Conservatives have put forward many justice bills recently, which, unfortunately, the government has voted against. However, this is a common-sense one.

● (1650)

I really hope that the amount of care, effort and research that my colleague from Parkland has put into the bill is supported by other members of the House, that the bill passes quickly and that we can rest assured that we have done our job in the House to stand for the principle of justice and be empathetic and compassionate to the victims of these crimes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Parkland has five minutes for his right of reply.

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise and speak to this legislation that I brought forward.

Private Members' Business

I want to start by thanking the McCann family, my colleagues of the House and all the supporters of the legislation and the victims' families.

This has been a nine-year journey for me. I was first inspired to bring forward the legislation before I was elected. I was inspired by the model put forward in Australia, and I was also inspired by advocates in the United Kingdom fighting for justice through Helen's law, so I want to thank them for inspiring me.

The legislation is named after Lyle and Marie McCann. Their killer remains incarcerated, but he is currently eligible for parole. He has refused to disclose where he hid the remains of his victims. The victim's family, the McCanns, has never been able to hold a proper funeral or have closure.

I believe that the continued withholding of that information by convicted offenders is an ongoing crime against the victims and their families. It is a crime that currently has no consequences. The possibility that people could be released on parole and be walking our streets while knowing where they hid their victims' remains, or that they could pass by their victims' families on the streets while they still know that information, is abhorrent to Canadians.

I want to address some of the criticism brought forward with respect to the legislation, and I do appreciate the opportunity to address it. I think it is unmerited. The fact is that the Parole Board does not need to consider an offender's refusal to co-operate and/or admit to their crime as a factor in parole hearings.

I would like to quote directly from the transcript of the killer in this case's parole hearing in December 2024. The Parole Board clearly stated that accountability and co-operation is not a requirement to be granted parole. Ryan Nash, a member of the Parole Board, stated to the killer, "You are entitled to hold your position of denial of accountability and responsibility, and it is not required to be granted parole that you admit to your offences." I think this summarizes why the legislation is so needed.

In debate today, there were some other criticisms brought forward. My colleagues claimed that the legislation could result in killers' receiving a shorter period of parole ineligibility than is currently prescribed by law. That is simply not the case. In Canada, first-degree murder already requires that there be a period of parole ineligibility of 25 years, and in second-degree murder cases, a period of parole ineligibility of 10 to 25 years. In the McCann case, as well as others, the killer was not found guilty of first- or second-degree murder but was found guilty of manslaughter and was eligible for parole after a period of seven years.

In cases where someone is found to be withholding crucial information about the remains of their victims but is not convicted of first- or second-degree murder, the legislation could be utilized by the judicial system and parole boards to increase the period of parole ineligibility and to deny parole.

I want to assure all members of the House that there is nothing in the legislation that would dictate to judges, parole boards or correctional officials what they must do. They would retain full discretion to utilize the tools that Parliament provides them in the legislation as they find appropriate.

I know that the people who work in our criminal justice system, our judges, parole board members and correctional officials, are professionals and may have reasons why they may or may not consider the co-operation to find a victim's remains as a factor in their decision-making. For example, if they have a reasonable belief that the remains of victims will never be found, of course it would not be appropriate to use this legislation in that case.

The only requirement the legislation would impose is that our judicial system actors consider this very important factor, and I think that is the least we can do for victims' families. It would also require that, in cases where they choose not to utilize these tools, they provide reasons for not utilizing them. Again, I think that providing those reasons to victims' families is the least we can do.

I want to read a letter from Bret McCann, the son of Lyle and Marie:

"On July 3, 2010, my parents, Lyle and Marie McCann, were murdered. The individual responsible was later convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment, yet he has never acknowledged his crime nor disclosed the location of my parents' remains. As a result, our family has been denied the most basic elements of closure: truth, accountability, and the ability to lay our loved ones to rest.

"Bill C-236 addresses a profound gap in Canada's criminal justice system. Meaningful rehabilitation and any credible assessment of parole eligibility must require offenders to accept responsibility for their crimes. In cases such as ours, the responsibility includes providing information about the whereabouts of victims' remains. Without such accountability, parole processes risk compounding the harm suffered by victims' families.

"Comparable legislation has already been adopted in other Commonwealth countries, including Australia's 'No Body, No Parole' laws and the United Kingdom's Helen's Law. These measures recognize that compassion for victims and public confidence in the justice system demand more than silence from convicted offenders—

● (1655)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I apologize. The hon. member is way over time.

The question is on the motion.

[Translation]

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[English]

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would ask that it pass on division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Therefore, I declare the motion carried on division. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to seek answers on the government's natural resources policies.

Residents in my community are watching the war in Iran and the closing of the Strait of Hormuz, which are blamed for the spike in prices at the pump. Just this week, my daughter shared with me that gas prices for her in Vancouver had reached over two dollars per litre. It is not just the Lower Mainland. The average cost of regular gas across Canada reached \$1.73 per litre on Tuesday.

This is not the fault of the Liberal government, but what is its responsibility is the decade-long failure to provide consistent continental access to our Canadian alternative to a global market, while raising our gas prices at home through the fuel standard tax. Let us not forget, it is official government policy to increase fuel costs by 13¢ per litre for gasoline and 16¢ per litre for diesel by 2030. No nation with such abundant resources should have to pay so much more for it.

Meanwhile, allies seeking Canadian energy have been poorly served by the Liberal government. Big promises now do not disguise its past failure to deliver. Promises to build a pipeline to Pacific tidewater in the future, which is already delayed, may I add, do not disguise the loss of Coastal Gateway, which would have been completed by now had it not been killed on the Liberals' watch.

Strong words of support from Quebec Liberal MPs for our energy products today do not disguise the fact that they were the same ones cheering the death of energy east. If the Liberals opposite would like to champion the expansion of Trans Mountain, let it not be forgotten that it was a private project that became so entangled in Liberal regulations they had to buy it and build it with public tax

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dollars at a significant cost overrun. I voted for the Liberals' major projects bills to see energy projects built faster, but after the Prime Minister's first year in office, they have not approved a single project.

One of Canada's largest oil producers, Canadian Natural Resources Limited, recently announced that it is halting expansion plans in Canada. The company cited the industrial carbon tax and federal regulatory barriers as creating an economic burden for a long-term growth investment in energy products. At a time of rising gas prices at home and around the world, we cannot let Canadian energy be left on the shelf. Canadians need relief at the pump, and the world needs Canada. They are banging at our door for our energy.

This is why Conservatives call for the immediate introduction and passage of an emergency energy supply plan to accelerate approval of LNG sites through the major project powers and guarantee a maximum six-month approval time for major energy infrastructure projects. We have no time to waste. Middle East energy powers are saying a continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz could see oil prices surging to \$150 a barrel and gas prices four times what they were before the conflict.

Will the government bring forward and approve our plan to lower costs for Canadians and build energy infrastructure faster?

● (1700)

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Madam Speaker, during the last election, we committed to making Canada a clean and a conventional energy superpower. Canadians elected us on that promise, and we are already delivering on that mandate. The projects referred to the Major Projects Office represent hundreds of billions of dollars in direct investment and tens of thousands of jobs. In this time of energy uncertainty, Canada is a beacon of stability, rising to meet the moment and increasing our energy exports, including through the Trans Mountain expansion pipeline, which, as the member noted, was built by Liberals who knew the importance of diversifying our energy exports and ensuring we can get our products to market.

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The member said that the world needs Canada, and on that we agree. When the International Energy Agency recently called on us to bring more oil to market to help stabilize prices, Canada answered that call. We committed to supply an additional 23.6 million barrels over the coming months, but while Canadian energy production reached a record high last year, the Alberta MOU is meant to unlock the full potential of Canada's energy sector, not just in conventional energy but clean energy as well. Conservatives like to talk about the pipeline in the MOU, but I will note that the Alberta government said it is still working on it and expects to submit a plan by June of this year.

What the Conservatives fail to recognize is that the MOU is about much more than just a potential pipeline. It is comprehensive and touches on everything from electricity interties to nuclear energy and artificial intelligence. Our allies are watching this progress. They see it in the pipeline we are optimizing to deal with both our present circumstances by diversifying our exports and in the projects that are forward-looking.

Canadians want us to move faster, build smarter and think bigger. They want energy that is reliable, responsible and made in Canada for Canadians, built with strong environmental standards and meaningful partnership with indigenous peoples. That is the work under way. That is the path ahead.

I will end with this: We build national projects the Canadian way, which is by listening, working with indigenous partners and making sure that environmental standards guide every step. This is how we build things that last. There has been a lot of attention on what comes next, and Alberta said it expects to bring forward a new pipeline proposal this summer. We look forward to seeing that proposal when it is ready. Our job is to ensure that it can be reviewed in a way that respects indigenous rights, protects the environment and brings provinces together, co-operating from a position of strength. If we keep that team Canada spirit, there is no limit on what we can build and where Canada can lead.

• (1705)

Helena Konanz: Madam Speaker, MOUs will not deliver Canadian natural resources to markets, but pipelines and ports will.

However, I want to turn to the forestry sector now. We know that a decade of Liberal ministers negotiating with four presidential administrations has not delivered a softwood lumber agreement, while Prime Minister Harper was able to sign one in mere weeks. New challenges of the second Trump administration therefore demand a new approach.

Will the member opposite support my call for a coalition of members of every party representing forestry communities to go to Washington, D.C., together to make the unified case that the tariffs placed on our lumber sector are not only illegal and unjust but also harmful to both our economies? Will the member join me in supporting an all-party, all-regions team Canada approach that could make the case for forestry to the U.S. Congress?

Caroline Desrochers: Madam Speaker, we have been making representations in Washington that the tariffs are unjustifiable, and we welcome the members' engagement in ensuring that we continue to advocate and put forward the position of the government. This is work that we need to do together. That is not happening right now, and members know it. We are not doing this in a concerted way. We are not doing this in a team Canada way, unfortunately, and we need to do more of that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Thursday, October 23, 2025, the House stands adjourned until Monday, April 13, at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 5:08 p.m.)

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