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Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, April 17, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[*English*]

LAWFUL ACCESS ACT, 2026

The House resumed from April 15 consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, An Act respecting lawful access, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives believe in law and order, and have always stood for common-sense measures to keep Canadians safe. For the past decade, we have been urging the Liberal government to reverse its failed policies and restore safety to our communities. Instead, the Liberals have let the situation get out of control.

Last fall, the Liberals put forward Bill C-2, which fell well short of protecting Canadians while overreaching in other cases. Conservatives forced the government to back down from Bill C-2, successfully blocking the Liberals' infringement on individual freedoms and privacy.

Now, they have introduced new legislation, Bill C-22, the lawful access act, which reintroduces some parts of Bill C-2. Canada is the only Five Eyes country that does not have a lawful access regime in place. Our investigative laws have failed to keep pace with the rapid growth of the digital ecosystem.

The Liberals, and some in law enforcement, argue that this gap has created an investigative stall where critical leads in cases of child sexual exploitation, human trafficking and organized crime are abandoned because authorities cannot quickly identify suspects behind IP addresses or burner phones. Even when police have legal authority to obtain data, service providers may lack the technical infrastructure to retrieve it or transfer it into a usable format, resulting in failed investigations. That is definitely a problem that needs to be addressed.

This proposed legislation is a definite improvement over its predecessor. It creates a new legal framework, enabling faster and lower-threshold access to basic data, clear emergency powers, structured international requests and mandatory provider compliance, in-

cluding built-in surveillance capabilities, metadata retention and a required parliamentary review after three years.

While police agencies have expressed their support for this bill and for lawful access, civil liberties organizations still have issues with parts of this bill. It is up to us to carefully review this legislation to ensure the Liberals do not repeat past failures.

I am hearing regularly from constituents concerned about this legislation. They want me to call on the government to withdraw Bill C-22. One of their biggest concerns is privacy and protection of their information. Bill C-22 would require Internet providers and other online services to facilitate access to basic information that would assist in the investigation of federal offences. That sounds reasonable.

The problem, though, is that would require those platforms to build and maintain surveillance capabilities inside their own systems. How secure would those systems be? How safe would those systems be? This new method of doing things would impose a financial burden on suppliers. They would be expected to develop and maintain technical surveillance capabilities at their own expense. I wonder how many would be willing to spend extra for robust data protection of something that does not add to their bottom line.

Conservatives believe police should have the tools necessary to stop criminals. Our concern with Bill C-2 was that the powers given to law enforcement and ministers were too broad. Bill C-22 is far narrower in the powers it gives to law enforcement and to the minister.

Bill C-22 focuses on telecommunications and Internet service providers, not any service providers. It would create oversight for ministerial orders and has explicit provisions in it that would prohibit the government from requiring the retention of web browsing history, social media activities or the actual content of communications. One could argue that this is a reasonable compromise as we attempt to balance the needs of society along with the rights of individuals.

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We live in a world where it seems the only constant is change. All of us in this House, from the oldest to the youngest, have witnessed huge technological changes in our lifetime.

● (1005)

In an increasingly digital world, our old-fashioned policing is not always suited to dealing with crimes committed online. We all understand the need to provide new tools for law enforcement officers to access digital information. We can see the desire for the framework that ensures that electronic service providers establish and maintain a system capable of providing the information that law enforcement officers are authorized to access, and that is key. Law enforcement officers must have a lawful reason to be given access to citizens' online information.

One of the things I appreciate about this bill before us is that it would mandate an automatic review three years after its provisions come into force. In these days of rapid change, that provision would ensure that not only would we get this legislation right today, but that we would have built in a way to ensure that it would not quickly become out of date. The purpose of Bill C-22 is to ensure that investigators can skip preliminary investigative requirements regarding information that is easily obtainable. Thus far, Canadian courts have stated that warrants or court orders are required for even the most basic of information even if only remotely private, such as whether someone is a subscriber of a telecom company. I am a strong proponent of individual rights, including the right to privacy. I also believe in our Constitution, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I understand as well that there are times when we need to balance individual and collective rights, and sometimes the collective rights are seen as being more important.

That may be the case with this legislation, though I understand there have been some issues raised as to whether it would survive a constitutional test. My hope is those problems can be fixed at the committee stage. For example, civil liberties groups have suggested that the blanket retention of metadata is too broad. They point out that the Electronic Communications Privacy Act in the U.S., for example, allows preservation on demand but does not allow blanket retention. In the European Union, the Court of Justice declared that blanket retention is incompatible with EU fundamental rights. As well, ministerial orders only require approval by intelligence commissioners. Not giving any oversight role to the Privacy Commissioner of Canada suggests that privacy is at best a secondary consideration. I am sure this was not the government's intention, and I expect this would be strengthened in committee.

Conservatives forced the Liberals to back down from Bill C-2, successfully blocking the government's attempt to infringe on individual freedoms and privacy. We stopped the Liberals from limiting the use of cash; opening mail without oversight; and demanding that any service provider, including hospitals, financial institutions and even dry cleaners, disclose user data without judicial oversight.

Bill C-22 would be an improvement, but still needs work. We support giving law enforcement agencies the tools they need to combat crime and keep communities safe, particularly as threats become more sophisticated in the digital age. At the same time, these powers must be accompanied by strong safeguards, clear limits and independent oversight to protect Canadians' rights and freedoms.

Conservatives will continue to stand for common-sense solutions that protect Canadians' individual freedom, privacy and safety.

● (1010)

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech and I wanted to ask him whether he is at all concerned about the fact that Bill C-22 does not give the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency a very big role to play compared to its Australian counterpart. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation is informed the moment the order is issued, not one year after the fact.

Does my colleague think it might be a good idea to amend Bill C-22 accordingly?

[*English*]

Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned in my speech that Canada is the only country in the Five Eyes that does not have a system in place to begin with. I also mentioned that this bill must go to committee to be examined, to be strengthened and to give Canadians and the authorities all the tools so Canadians can be protected while their privacy laws or privacy rights cannot be infringed upon.

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola.

One of the things my colleague mentioned was Bill C-2. Let us not be naive. We know that the Liberals achieved their majority through a number of deals in the background. What concerns me as a member of Parliament and as a citizen is the fact that we would have been saddled with Bill C-2, a bill that we as Conservatives successfully fought against, and rightly so. There is a time to oppose in this place and a time to support. That was clearly the time to oppose.

I would like the member's opinion on why Bill C-2 failed and whether the Liberals appear to have learned any lessons from that, because we may be in a position where they just force these things through in the future.

Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for telling us about these bills and what he does to handle such cases and such bills in the House of Commons, representing our party.

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Bill C-2 would have been a huge infringement on the privacy rights of Canadians. I am still receiving emails from constituents asking me to block Bill C-2; they think Bill C-2 is still in place. That infringement of Canadian laws and Canadians' rights is the greatest concern. We have to protect the privacy rights of Canadians. In the meantime, we have to find ways to protect them in the age of a digital world.

Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thomson—Nicola, apparently back-to-back today.

One of the things I appreciated about my hon. colleague's speech was the balanced nature of it. I would like to ask him to comment on his role as a legislator here and as somebody who does not blindly accept things. He talked about how we have to recognize things at committee, see things at committee and question things at committee. I am proud to be part of a party that does that. I would ask for his comments on that as well.

• (1015)

Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, the role of opposition is to really stand up for Canadians, fight for Canadians and make sure the government does not overreach on the rights of Canadians at any level, regardless of whether it is at the economic level, the human rights level or the privacy rights level. That is where the opposition stands in this House strongly to make sure that, when we oppose, we oppose for the benefit of Canadians. When we co-operate, it is also for the benefit of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to tell me about the threshold that the government has set for obtaining information, which is the lowest possible threshold. Does my colleague agree with that or does he think that we should be more stringent and raise the threshold for obtaining information?

[*English*]

Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I agree. I think we need tougher access to provide information. The laws have to protect Canadians first and foremost, and there is a way to do that without having to infringe on their rights.

Patricia Lattanzio (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it an honour for me to take the floor today and to speak on behalf of Bill C-22. I rise as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, in support of our government's bill on lawful access. The legislation is really about one simple thing: keeping Canadians safe in a digital world that criminals are increasingly exploiting.

Let us be clear about the reality we are facing. In 2024 alone, police reported more than 16 cases of child pornography, exploitation and abuse. In 94% of those cases, they could not identify a suspect or gather enough evidence to proceed. Right now, criminals hide behind anonymous usernames, burner phones and IP addresses. Meanwhile, our police are stuck navigating systems that were never designed for today's digital threats. By the time officers get the information they need, it is often too late, evidence is gone and victims are left without justice. Police need modern tools to properly

investigate crimes and keep Canadians safe, and that is exactly why our new Liberal government has introduced Bill C-22.

In the Spencer case, the Supreme Court of Canada said that the police need some type of legal authority, such as a legislative authority or prior judicial authorization, to obtain subscriber information linked to specific online activity. Bill C-22 would provide the police not just with the authority they need in order to address a particular criminal activity considered in the Spencer decision regarding accessing and storing child sexual exploitation and abuse material but also with a broader way in circumstances where law enforcement needs to quickly identify suspects but does not have the necessary legal tools to do so.

To borrow the words of the head of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and commissioner of the OPP, Thomas Carrique, "From Internet child exploitation to extortions, to home invasions, to carjackings, to drive-by shootings, to hate motivated crime, to extremism, lawful access is absolutely required and it's required now." We know that current trends in crimes like fraud, extortion and auto theft are increasingly linked to sophisticated global crime networks. Organized crime is a multi-billion-dollar business that is taking full advantage of digital technologies, which is why it is imperative that we give police services the measures they need to stop these crimes.

When criminals target our most vulnerable people online by stealing their identity and using digital tools to hide their tracks, Canadians expect the law to give police the tools they need to respond quickly, lawfully and with respect for the privacy of Canadians. Bill C-22 would do just that. Among other things, the bill would provide timely access to data and information to support the investigation of crime in the digital age. The bill also focuses on modernizing the Criminal Code to give law enforcement agencies the tools they need to investigate crime and protect Canadians in 2026.

One of these proposed new tools is confirmation of service demand. The new confirmation of service demand tool would provide a new lawful authority to enable police to confirm with a telecommunications service provider, such as Bell or Rogers, whether or not they provide telecommunications services to a specific subscriber, client, account or identifier, like an IP address or a phone number.

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This new tool would typically be used to help police identify which provider provides services to a phone number or an IP address. I will explain in plain language: This would allow police to ask the simple question to a telecom provider such as Bell or Rogers, “Do you service this phone number or IP address, yes or no?” That is it. There would be no content and no personal details, just basic confirmation to help investigators take the next step and seek proper judicial authorization when and where required.

The objective of the tool is to assist police in determining which telecommunications service provider has in their possession or control data relevant to an investigation and may be served with a production order to compel the production of this data. Law enforcement would be authorized to make this demand only if it has reasonable grounds to suspect that an offence has been or will be committed, and that the confirmation of service would assist in the investigation of the offence. As a safeguard against inappropriate use, the service provider would be able to challenge the demand in a court with no obligation to provide the information or confirmation until a final decision is made by the court.

● (1020)

The bill also proposes to clarify in the Criminal Code that law enforcement would continue to be permitted to ask a telecommunications service provider or anyone else, including other types of service providers such as banks, hotels or car rental companies, to provide information voluntarily, including the confirmation of service I referenced earlier. This clarification is very important to preserve the ability of police to engage in online policing activities, such as asking questions to seek basic information that does not raise a reasonable expectation of privacy. Our government believes that Canadians should be safe online and that police should have the tools they need to act quickly when people are in danger.

The legislation would make something very clear in the law: If information is voluntarily provided to police, such as an IP address from a victim's complaint, a tip from a member of the public or information shared by trusted international partners such as the U.S. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, law enforcement would be able to receive that information and act on it without having to first seek a court order. It would also clarify that police would be able to rely on the information that is readily and publicly available, and that they would not be required to issue a formal demand if a service provider chooses to provide that information voluntarily.

Bill C-22 would also address an important gap when it comes to urgent situations. These circumstances are rare, but they do occur. Every minute matters. In cases where there is an immediate threat to someone's life or safety, or where critical evidence could disappear, police may need to act quickly to obtain basic subscriber information linked to an IP address. Think about situations where officers are trying to locate a child who has been abducted, using their cellphone signal to trace the source of a credible threat of imminent violence or to determine where a livestream of child sexual abuse is taking place, so they can rescue the victim and stop the abuse. In those moments, speed can mean the difference between life and death.

Our laws already recognize that in true emergencies police may act without prior judicial authorization, as long as the legal grounds for doing so exist. The bill would simply provide clarity so officers would be able to respond quickly to protect victims while respecting the rule of law. Bill C-22 is about ensuring that when Canadians are in danger, the law would give police the clarity and the tools they need in order to help, stop the crime and keep people safe. The bill would make it crystal clear that this exception for urgent circumstances would apply to the seizure of subscriber information by amending the existing “exigent circumstances” provided in the Criminal Code.

Particularly in the context of global crime networks, equipping police services with these capabilities is critical in placing Canada in line with our Five Eyes partners, and it would respond to the recommendations made in the “Special Report on the Lawful Access to Communications by Security and Intelligence Organizations” by the non-partisan members of the National Security Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, NSICOP, which I had the honour of serving on and chairing.

Other meaningful purposes in the bill would better equip police to deal with situations involving organized crime tools, such as temporary phones, burner phones and vehicle switches, as ways of avoiding police surveillance and detection. It would also provide a new search warrant framework to govern the unique nature of computer searches so police would be able to properly examine digital devices and data in a manner that is compliant with Supreme Court rulings. The proposed tools and modernization amendments included in the bill are critically needed, and these amendments would have a concrete impact on victims and on the safety of our communities.

I encourage members from across the floor and across the aisle to join us in heeding the call of police organizations across the country to support this much-needed legislation.

● (1025)

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola.

My colleague has been involved in the justice portfolio, which is really the opposite side of the coin to the public safety portfolio. There is obviously a difference. There is one thing I really would like her to comment on because she has ardently expressed support for this piece of legislation.

I am sure my colleague spoke to Bill C-2 as well, so my question is this: Did she speak on Bill C-2, and is she prepared now to acknowledge the colossal failure it was, which is why we are now here with Bill C-22 in a much more reasonable form?

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Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Speaker, I did not speak to Bill C-2, but I am taking the opportunity this morning, as the member opposite rightly pointed out, to state that I am in total favour of Bill C-22. Although we work through legislation in the House, nothing is perfect. No bill is perfect in its format nor sometimes even in its content, and that is why we have committees, where members from across the aisle from all parties have an opportunity to weigh in, as well as to hear from experts and stakeholders.

This is an important piece of legislation. I do hope that Bill C-22 will be adopted so we can send it to the public safety committee and members will have the opportunity to delve into the details that may require fine tuning.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech. She always explains her opinions in such a calm manner.

I have a question. I am wondering why the government chose the lowest possible threshold for obtaining information, that of reasonable grounds to suspect, rather than the more stringent threshold of reasonable grounds to believe.

Can my colleague explain why the government chose to go that route? I do not understand that and I would like a clear answer.

Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Speaker, I will give my answer in English this time because I am more familiar with the English terminology.

[*English*]

We already have in the Criminal Code the threshold of “reasonable grounds to suspect”.

[*Translation*]

It can be found in several sections of the Criminal Code, including section 487.017. This already exists in the Criminal Code.

[*English*]

We also think that “reasonable grounds to suspect” is higher than the threshold of mere suspicion.

[*Translation*]

Madeleine Chenette (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and to the Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her hard work and her leadership. I want to add that my constituents in Thérèse-De Blainville urgently want this bill to pass.

The bill must be referred to the Standing Committee on National Security. Does my colleague have confidence that we will be able to move forward quickly?

Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Speaker, I believe that all Canadians want this bill to be sent quickly to the Standing Committee on National Security so that it can be studied there and then passed.

In light of the debates that took place in the House this week on this fine bill, I see that there is goodwill on the part of members, who want to discuss it and address this issue. I appreciate that.

It is a very important bill. For too long now, police officers have lacked the tools they need to access the information necessary to prevent crime. I am therefore eager for this bill to pass and I am confident that members will vote for it.

● (1030)

[*English*]

Hon. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs and One Canadian Economy (Canada-U.S. Trade), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for permitting me to speak to Bill C-22, an act respecting lawful access.

It is always a great pleasure to speak in this chamber on behalf of the constituents of Willowdale. In this particular case, I should say that in Willowdale, we are very well served by 32 Division of the Toronto Police Service. I recently had the opportunity, once again, to visit with them and to be guided by the wisdom of the officers, who are doing so much for all the residents of my riding and beyond.

Today, I should also say that I am speaking as a member of the public safety committee. It gives me great pleasure to speak on new legislation that is timely and would allow our police and law enforcement agencies to undertake their work with renewed vigour.

As members know, this piece of legislation is the product of 10 months of diligent joint work by the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Justice and the Secretary of State for Combatting Crime. It is important to emphasize that this legislation would fill a very significant gap that had previously handcuffed the investigative powers of our law enforcement officials. It is also important to underscore that Canada was the only member of the Five Eyes and the G7 countries that was lagging by not having devised a legal framework or regime for lawful access.

At a time when extortion, child exploitation, human trafficking and cybercrimes that target all Canadians, in particular our seniors, are on the rise, it is imperative that we update our approach and strengthen our legal capacity to ensure that we are supporting our law enforcement agencies in their important investigative work. Given the speed at which certain crimes are now occurring, it is important to keep up with the times and to ensure that our officials do not hit a wall and can deal with serious crimes more expeditiously and on a timely basis.

The substance of the bill and the layers of legal guardrails in the system have been adequately explained by those who have spoken before me, in particular the Minister of Public Safety and the Secretary of State for Combatting Crime. In addition, we had the great pleasure of hearing from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice earlier this morning.

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We are a country that should not have to choose between safety and crime. As the Secretary of State for Combatting Crime eloquently put it before this very chamber, “The alternative to this bill is not privacy. The alternative is impunity.”

Rather than focus on the substance of this bill, because, as I indicated, many others have risen before me and spoken about the layers of protection that exist in this bill, I want to highlight the extent to which this bill has truly benefited from cross-partisan contributions. When we work together, all members of this chamber, or when we reach out and are informed by the perspective of individuals from all across the political spectrum, I have every confidence that we can come up with better legislation.

As members know, the Minister of Public Safety, in his wisdom, tasked a former distinguished member of this chamber and a former minister from B.C. to undertake the initial consultations before this bill was devised. He had the difficult task of meeting with individuals and associations with differing views. This bill certainly benefited greatly from the early work that Murray Rankin is responsible for. He had the opportunity to speak to a number of civil society organizations, academics, and law enforcement and industry groups as well, so that is on one end of the political spectrum. On the other end, I also think it is incredibly important to give credit to the member opposite, the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, who is a distinguished former police officer himself and also has contributed to this great legislative effort.

• (1035)

I can say, given that I am on the public safety committee, I remember that many, many months ago we started chatting about how incredibly important lawful access was. This, of course, was because we were hearing from a wide variety of witnesses who indicated to us how critically important it was. Those discussions with the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner eventually led to many meetings he had with our Minister of Public Safety. Those two are real examples of how, when we come together in this chamber, we are capable of producing much better legislation.

In addition to that, I think it also bears repeating that NSICOP, which is our parliamentary committee comprising members from all parties and from both chambers, has also said that it is critically important that this legislation be adopted. I certainly hope, in that cross-partisan spirit, that the fact that many individuals inside this chamber and others outside have been consulted widely on this will mean that all members will understand the critical importance of voting in favour of this legislation.

Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal catch-and-release policies have actually caused this crime. Before Trudeau came along 10 years ago, we did not have a crime wave; now we do. We also did not have Bill C-22. The difference here is actually the catch-and-release problems, the catch-and-release policies we are suffering under.

Would it not make more sense to stop shooting down Conservative bills, anti-crime bills, and leave the privacy of Canadians alone?

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite is likely aware, today we are here to debate Bill C-22, which is a very significant piece of legislation. As I have indicated, this government

has always benefited greatly from the views and the perspectives of individuals throughout this chamber. We are always willing to welcome any input that anyone has. This bill, as I indicated, has also benefited from that. I have no doubt that, once it is adopted, our law enforcement agencies and individuals who are working around the clock in this country will benefit greatly from the adoption of this bill.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's speech. We serve on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security together. I listened to him carefully, but I want to ask him a brief question to ensure I have understood correctly.

According to the bill, the definition of essential service providers, which may be subject to injunctions when it comes to lawful access to information, is to be determined by regulation. I wonder whether it is appropriate for this to be determined by the executive branch. Why should such an important definition in this bill be established by regulation rather than by legislation?

[*English*]

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite and I have had the great benefit of working closely together on the public safety committee. The point she raises is certainly a valid one, but as we know, this particular bill will be referred to committee, and that would be an exceptional opportunity for us all to weigh in and make sure this is as robust and as good a piece of legislation as possible. I have no doubt that the member will be a very big part of that exercise.

• (1040)

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the legislation is extremely important, because it is giving law enforcement the necessary tools that they need in order to protect Canadians. I understand that Canada is the only one of the Five Eyes countries that does not have lawful access legislation in place in order to give law enforcement those tools. I am wondering if the member can expand on why it is important, given the context of the Five Eyes and Canada's position there.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member has rightly indicated, there was a big gap in terms of making sure that our law enforcement agencies have all the necessary tools to do a thorough job when they are investigating a wide variety of crimes. We certainly live in an era when the speed and the pace at which such crimes are taking place are very different from what they were previously.

It was certainly high time for us to listen to those law enforcement agencies and to look at the experience that the other Five Eyes and indeed the other G7 countries had on this. We looked at that to make sure we would come up with a robust system that was balanced and that would have legal safeguards, and that is why I think the product of this entire exercise is a very good piece of legislation.

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Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is an old story about a traveller in the desert. Night had fallen and the air had turned bitterly cold. The traveller had just enough space and warmth in the tent to get through the night, but then a camel approached and asked if it could put its nose inside just to stay warm. The traveller agreed. It seemed harmless. However, then the camel asked to bring in its head and then its shoulders, and before long, the entire camel was inside the tent, leaving the traveller out in the cold.

It is a simple story, but it carries an important lesson: When we allow something small without thinking through where it could lead, we can often end up somewhere very different from where we intended. That is the caution we should keep in mind as we debate Bill C-22, because this bill is about expanding the powers of the state into the digital lives of Canadians. While each individual step may seem reasonable on its own, we have to ask ourselves where the path we are taking leads.

There is no disagreement in this House about the goal. We all want law enforcement to have the tools they need to go after child predators, organized crime, human traffickers and terrorists. We all recognize that criminals are using modern technology to hide their activities and that the law must keep pace. Conservatives are always open to modernizing the law. The question before us today is not whether to modernize. The question is whether Bill C-22 gets the balance right. Modernization should not come and need not come at the cost of accountability, and it cannot come at the cost of the freedoms that Canadians expect us to protect.

We have been here before in this parliamentary session. The government tried to legislate for lawful access earlier in this session when Bill C-2 was introduced as a sweeping solution. It was broad, it was rushed and it raised serious concerns across the board. The fact that we are now debating Bill C-22 is, in itself, an acknowledgement that the first attempt missed the mark. This bill is an improvement in many respects. It narrows certain provisions. It introduces some safeguards. However, improvements do not mean that we have it right. There are still real concerns that we need to work through in committee as this bill wends its way through Parliament.

To start, I want to talk about accountability. The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians found that our agencies do not systematically track the challenges they face with lawful access. Let us think about that. We are being asked to expand powers in an area where we do not even have consistent data on what is not working today. Where in this bill, then, is the requirement to track those challenges and report them clearly to Parliament? If we do not measure the problem, how can we claim to solve it?

We also need to engage with the trust that Canadians have put in us. They are not legal experts. Most Canadians are not reading every clause of this bill, but they still want to feel safe. They want to know who can access their information, under what conditions and with what limits. Right now, those answers are not as clear as they should be.

This bill would lower the threshold in key areas from “reasonable grounds to believe” to “reasonable grounds to suspect”. That may sound like a small change in the legalese, but it is not. It is a

real shift that would make it easier for the state to access personal information earlier in an investigation and it needs to be studied carefully to ensure that it is absolutely necessary and minimally impairing of rights. When we combine lower thresholds with broader powers, we have to be very careful and ask whether we are gradually moving that camel further and further into the tent.

I want to move to data retention. This is something a number of speakers have touched on and it is something I have received a lot of correspondence about from members of my community. In serious investigations, especially those involving children or violent crime, data can disappear quickly. In some cases, it is gone within 30 days. That makes it harder to hold offenders accountable. Yes, Parliament absolutely needs to address that, but the solution cannot be to collect and retain large amounts of data on everyone, regardless of suspicion, indefinitely.

● (1045)

This bill would allow for the retention of metadata, including information that can reveal locations and patterns of life in some cases when combined with other information but nonetheless in a way that has a lot of people worried. We need to be asking basic but critical questions about this: Who is holding that data, where is it stored, how long is it kept and why do we need to apply this broadly instead of targeting serious offences? If we are going to impact privacy rights, then we must do it in a targeted, proportionate and justified way that we can explain to the public. Otherwise, we risk casting a wider net than intended, creating all kinds of concerns and worries in our society.

I want to move on to system vulnerability. This bill would require service providers to build and maintain systems that allow for lawful access. The intention is understandable, but we have to be realistic about the risks. Creating access mechanisms can create vulnerabilities. We have seen cases in other jurisdictions where systems built for lawful access were later exploited by hackers. Canadians have a simple expectation. They do not want back doors into their private communications. Even if this bill does not explicitly create one, we need to be absolutely certain that it does not create independent pathways that could be abused.

Government Orders

Again, secrecy and oversight are an issue. This bill would rely somewhat on secret ministerial orders and delayed notice. In some cases, individuals may not know their data was accessed for years, if at all. Oversight that happens after the fact is simply not enough. If we are expanding powers, the safeguards must be strong, independent and timely. Canadians need to know that there are real checks in place, not just internal reviews behind closed doors.

Finally, we need to be honest about the broader picture. This bill addresses some challenges in digital investigations, but it does not address many of the issues Canadians are most concerned about when it comes to crime and public safety. It does not address repeat violent offenders. It does not address gaps in bail or sentencing. It does not solve the broader crisis we are seeing in communities across the country. Therefore, we need to be careful not to overstate what this bill would achieve.

Our discussion and our debate today should not be about choosing between safety and freedom. Canadians deserve both. They deserve laws that allow the police to do their job effectively and they deserve to know their rights are protected at the same time. That is the balance we are trying to strike. The current iteration of Bill C-22 is a step in that direction, but is not there yet. We need clearer accountability. We need stronger safeguards. We need to ensure that in trying to solve the problem we are not quietly creating others, because once these powers are granted they are very difficult to take back. That is why we have to get this right, not just for today but for the future, so Canadians can feel both safe and free, not one at the expense of the other.

When the camel first asked, it did not ask to take over the whole tent. It did not demand. It asked politely. It asked for something small, something temporary, just enough to take the edge off the cold. That is what makes the lesson here so powerful. The traveller did not make a bad decision out of carelessness, but out of compassion and reasonableness. He thought he was in control of the situation, but step by step, decision by decision, the situation changed until he no longer was. If we are not careful, if we do not take the time to examine all the possible angles and unintended consequences of this bill, we risk finding that the balance has shifted against us, not all at once but gradually, in ways that were easy to justify at every stage along the way, but which nonetheless unduly upset the delicate balance between privacy and speedy enforcement.

I look forward to continuing the debate and discussion on this important topic.

• (1050)

[*Translation*]

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois finds it unacceptable that the government is granting greater powers to the police and intelligence services while slashing the budget of the body responsible for overseeing them, namely the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA. Its budget has been cut by 15% as a result of the Liberal government's penny-pinching.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks.

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

[*English*]

The hon. member has pointed out one of the really difficult issues that we are grappling with, with this government, which is that the Liberals talk, saying things that people want to hear. They talk about making changes that need to be made, but somewhere behind the scenes resources are not following the matter and Canadians are not, in fact, getting what they need.

That is one of the main reasons that we really need to think about this. We need to work hard to get this right.

Roman Baber (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the necessity of protecting children online, especially from predators who access unlawful and criminal material.

I am wondering if my friend could tell me why she believes the Liberals refused to adopt the Conservative suggestion and, in response to the Senneville decision that struck down mandatory minimum sentencing for access and possession to materials that violate children, the Liberals decided they will have none of it.

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for giving me the opportunity yesterday in the justice committee to ask questions about this very topic.

It is a good example of how the Liberals give with one hand and take away with the other. It is incredibly important to protect children against predation, online and off-line. I hope that the government will see reason and restore the mandatory minimums for child sexual exploitation.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I know this may offend people. There are people who think there are too many lawyers in politics, but I do not think there are enough of us. I want to thank the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, whose legal background showed through in the way she put together that critique of Bill C-22.

I am also very concerned about changing “reasonable grounds to believe” to “reasonable grounds to suspect”. I would like the member to expand on whether she found any previous example of that kind of threshold being used. I cannot find a previous example of “reasonable grounds to suspect”.

• (1055)

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank my colleague for the generosity in her comments. It means a lot to me when one of my colleagues from Vancouver Island recognizes the value that other members bring to this House.

Like the hon. member, I have also looked for examples. The reality is, at the end of the day, suspecting and believing are two different things. The government is creating yet another change that dilutes rights in a way that is unclear, that the courts will have to grapple with, that will add to litigation, that will add to backlogs and that will add to the incredible weighty amount of legal mumbo-jumbo that exists.

I hope the government will think very hard about what we are trying to do here.

Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard much from the Liberals about how we are obstructing their bills and whatnot, even though they are filibustering their own bills in committee. Usually that means that they are trying to create a narrative that we are obstructing.

Do you feel that we are obstructing or debating this bill?

The Deputy Speaker: Before I let the member respond, I would like to remind members to speak through the Chair and not directly to members.

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, the fact that this bill is coming back to the House on a second attempt to do this shows the contributions that Conservatives in opposition can make to the important work we do in this House.

I want to thank the government for listening to the things we raised the first time around. I look forward to working with them in committee to make this bill even stronger.

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-22, an act respecting lawful access.

Before entering politics, I spent nearly three decades working in information technology, and one of the things that I learned very quickly in that field is that technology does not stand still. The systems, tools and threats of 10 years ago rarely resemble those of today. Unfortunately, criminals understand that reality just as well as anyone else. They adapt quickly. They use encrypted applications, anonymous accounts, rapidly changing digital identities and increasingly sophisticated digital tools to conceal their activities and evade law enforcement.

Meanwhile, our legal framework has often struggled to keep pace. Let me be clear at the outset. Conservatives recognize that law enforcement must have the lawful tools necessary to investigate serious crime in the digital age. When police are pursuing child predators, human traffickers, terrorists and organized criminal networks, they should not be hindered by outdated laws built for a predigital world. That is a legitimate problem, and Parliament has a responsibility to address it.

Parliament also has a responsibility to ensure that in modernizing our laws, we do not grant powers that are broader than necessary, weaker in oversight than appropriate or more intrusive than justified, because history has repeatedly shown that once a government is granted extraordinary powers, those powers rarely remain confined to their narrowest intended use unless Parliament is vigilant.

The House has been down this road before. The lawful access provisions now before us appeared in Bill C-2, where they generated substantial concern among privacy advocates, experts and par-

liamentarians alike. The government has now separated those provisions out and returned with Bill C-22, a narrower stand-alone version in some respects. It is an acknowledgement that the earlier approach required reconsideration, and while this version is improved in certain areas, legitimate concerns remain that warrant careful study at committee.

Part of the challenge in debating legislation like this is that many of the terms involved can sound desperately benign. Words like “subscriber information” or “metadata” may sound minor, but anyone with experience in digital systems understands otherwise. Metadata can reveal a tremendous amount about an individual. It can reveal who—

• (1100)

The Deputy Speaker: I have to interrupt the member for Standing Order 31 statements, Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CAPE BRETON DORADOS

Mike Kelloway (Sydney—Glace Bay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize five outstanding young athletes from my riding of Sydney—Glace Bay who represented Nova Scotia and Cape Breton great distinction.

From March 12 to 15, five members of the Cape Breton Dorados swim team travelled to Maine to compete at the 2026 winter championships. Simryn, Bryson, Rori, Sophia and Lyla all achieved top-10 finishes in their respective events.

The Cape Breton Dorados have been a pillar of our community for over 50 years, currently supporting approximately 70 swimmers between the ages of six and 18 and providing a full pathway from entry-level to high-performance competition.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the swimmers, the coaches and the volunteers who make the Dorados program possible. Cape Breton is very proud of them.

* * *

BOW RIVER HOCKEY

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate two outstanding hockey stories from Bow River.

Statements by Members

First, I congratulate the community of Taber on being named the 2026 Kraft Hockeyville national champions. Through adversity, and with remarkable fortitude, the people of Taber came together and earned this well-deserved victory. It stands as the latest chapter in the proud culture of hockey excellence that the people of Bow River continue to build. Taber's win provides \$250,000 to rebuild its arena after it was destroyed, along with the exciting opportunity to host an NHL pre-season game next fall. I look forward to attending this much-anticipated game.

Second, I would like to give a huge shout-out to the Brooks Bandits. Three more graduates signed NHL contracts this past week, providing further proof of the world-class development program the Bandits have built. We look forward to their potential NHL debuts.

Hockey is thriving in Bow River, and these stories make us all proud. Go, Taber, and go, Bandits!

* * *

TAX CLINICS

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier—Gloucester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is tax season time, and this weekend we are once again supporting families in Ottawa—Vanier—Gloucester through our free tax clinic, by helping them complete their income tax returns.

[*Translation*]

This is an opportunity to support people who need some help filing their tax returns, because filing a return is essential for accessing important benefits like the Canadian dental care plan, the Canada child benefit, the Canada groceries and essentials benefit and the GST/HST credit, to help with the cost of living.

[*English*]

I thank Lucille Collard, MPP for Ottawa—Vanier; our teams; and all the volunteers for their time and commitment during the four tax clinics that were held this month. Thanks to them, we are making it easier to access essential programs to improve quality of life.

[*Translation*]

Through this collective effort, we have helped over 160 families. Together, we are making a real difference for our community.

* * *

[*English*]

BICENTENNIAL OF GUELPH

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, work is under way to celebrate the founding of Guelph in 1827. Next year marks 200 years since the city was founded at the confluence of the Speed and Eramosa rivers, in the province of Upper Canada, by Scottish poet and novelist John Galt.

The Guelph 200 community working group has already begun planning. On April 23, the city will launch its official bicentennial logo, marking the beginning of year-long celebrations, including an anniversary weekend and a summer homecoming.

Guelphites are proud of the Royal City and its 200 years of history. It has produced John McCrae of *In Flanders Fields*, Nobel Prize winners and so many other great Canadians.

The slogan of the bicentennial, “rooted deep, growing together”, speaks of a community proud of its past and confident in its future.

I ask all colleagues to join me in marking this historic occasion.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL HAITIAN DIASPORA DAYS

Natilien Joseph (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the launch of the eighth International Haitian Diaspora Days summit, which runs until April 19 in Montreal.

This year's theme is “United in creating a strong, supportive community for a brighter future”, so the summit will highlight vital priorities such as education, hope and economic development. It is a tremendous opportunity for community leaders, business owners and members of the diaspora to rally around shared goals related to international development, co-operation and solidarity. Every day, the Haitian community makes outstanding contributions to the social, cultural and economic vitality of Quebec and Canada.

On behalf of all my colleagues, I want to thank the organizers and wish them every success during the eighth summit.

* * *

● (1105)

[*English*]

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the authors of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms understood the importance of protecting fundamental freedoms such as the freedom of conscience and religion; the freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression; and the freedom of association and peaceful assembly.

Across Canada, places of worship, from churches and gurdwaras to mosques, synagogues and temples, serve as vital centres in our communities. They are gathering places that provide hope, a sense of meaning and a place of belonging for many. We owe it to Canadians and our communities to ensure the protection of our freedom to worship in our own way.

Regrettably, over the past 10 years, there has been an alarming increase in incidents of mischief committed against religious property in Canada. The burden of damage should rest not on the shoulders of the victims but instead firmly with those who break the law. By protecting our religious communities, we send a clear message that vandalizing places of worship is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

* * *

ARTWORK ON IMMIGRATION

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, I hosted a reception for new Canadian citizens in my constituency office, in Kingston and the Islands. At the event, we featured the artwork of Sergio Jaua, a Canadian who immigrated from Venezuela.

His exhibition “IN BETWiN: Stories of Immigrants” brings forward the human side that can get lost in public debate. At a moment when debate about immigration is increasingly shaped by fear instead of facts, his work offers the necessary counterstory, one rooted in dignity, resilience and shared humanity. Through thoughtful interviews and striking portraits, Sergio documented the lived experiences of new immigrants who have built their lives in Kingston.

His portraits remind us that immigration is not abstract. It is about people, families and futures. Choosing to listen is an act of community strength, and choosing to honour these stories is an act of national responsibility. May all sides of this House keep that in mind as we shape the Canada we call home.

* * *

HIGH-SPEED RAIL

Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their government to live within its means. The Liberals' proposed \$90-billion Alto rail project fails to meet that basic test.

At a time when families are struggling with the costs of groceries and housing, the Liberals are asking taxpayers to take on tens of billions of dollars of new debt for a project with unclear timelines, uncertain ridership and no credible plan to control costs. Canadians have seen this pattern before: ballooning budgets, missed deadlines and taxpayers left frustrated, holding the bill.

Conservatives support targeted infrastructure improvements that can move people and goods faster at lower cost and with less risk to taxpayers. I will also note the local concerns about what this means for the future of the Via Rail service in Cornwall and along the Highway 401 corridor where attempted cuts by Via have already been tried.

This \$90-billion plan is not a nation-building project. It is a boondoggle waiting to happen.

[*Translation*]

Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, as a native of the Lower North Shore, Randy Jones was bound to be born a giant. In a landscape as vast as the horizon, between rock and sea where the possibilities were endless, he did it all: from fisherman to mayor of Gros-Mécatina, from warden of the Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent RCM to can-

Statements by Members

didate in Manicouagan, from husband to father, from friend to legend—

The Deputy Speaker: Was there a problem with the interpretation?

Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, I was trying to say a few words about someone who has passed away and I could not hear myself speak, so I sat down.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the member have the unanimous consent of the House to start over?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

RANDY JONES

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as a native of the Lower North Shore, Randy Jones was bound to be born a giant. In a landscape as vast as the horizon, between rock and sea where the possibilities were endless, he did it all: from fisherman to mayor of Gros-Mécatina, from warden of the Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent RCM to candidate in Manicouagan, from husband to father, from friend to legend.

He carried the Lower North Shore on his shoulders, not because of his stature, but because of his heart, which beat for all the coasters, his vision, which saw all the possibilities beyond the obstacles, and his voice, which said, like a promise, “Follow me wherever you want to go”.

He knew how to fight with strength and compassion for the forgotten, for dignity, and for the right to live on the land. He wanted to liberate his island. He brought cell service and the Internet to the region. He saved lives. He may not have had time to drive the 500 kilometres of coastline from Kegaska to Blanc-Sablon in his pickup truck, but the day we inaugurate “Jones Road”, many of us will be there to travel down the road with him one last time.

Farewell, Randy.

* * *

● (1110)

AUTOMOTIVE AND TRUCKING COMPANIES

Madeleine Chenette (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every job lost in the auto and trucking industries, particularly because of tariffs, is a loss for Canada. We are working hard to help auto and trucking companies pivot and adapt to new trade realities through the \$5-billion strategic innovation fund.

My departmental colleagues and I are in regular contact with Paccar and Unifor executives and the Government of Quebec to maintain production and protect well-paying jobs in Sainte-Thérèse.

Statements by Members

Retooling a Canadian company's production line takes effective negotiation with all stakeholders and patience to give the company's American headquarters time to determine the required investments and agreements. At the same time, we are also working to encourage our cities and provinces to buy Canadian. To date, we have helped over 100 businesses in Quebec pivot and adapt to this new reality, and we are working hard to do the same for Paccar.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, London is the canary in the coal mine. When things go wrong, Londoners are the first to feel it, and it hits our community the hardest.

The trillion-dollar net capital outflow under the Liberals has taken a real toll. London's unemployment rate has climbed to 9.1%, the highest in Canada, and affordability pressures continue to rise alongside crime, addiction and growing mental health challenges. Londoners know the status quo is not working. We need to reverse the loss of capital and create a competitive environment where businesses can invest, projects get built and workers can find stable jobs.

Londoners need Conservative policies that will lower costs, remove barriers and reward investment in work. We have seen the Prime Minister borrow Conservative ideas before. Our community desperately needs him to do a lot more of it, and fast.

* * *

HIGH-SPEED TRAIN

Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are building big things again in Canada. After generations of studies and delays, the federal government is delivering on an essential high-speed train that will connect the most densely populated part of our country, and Ottawa will be at the heart of the new Alto high-speed train.

The mayor and the City of Ottawa recognize what a transformative project this will be. The Ottawa Board of Trade says that Alto will deliver a larger labour market, easier access to clients and partners across the corridor, and new investment and development opportunities around all station areas. We are talking about \$24.5 billion in annual economic activity.

Alto will be good for jobs. Alto will be good for the economy. Alto will be good for Ottawa, and Alto will be good for Canada.

* * *

AFFORDABILITY

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after 11 years of Liberals, Canadians are drowning in bills. In addition, they are feeling the strain at the checkout and at the gas pump.

Over 8,000 Oshawa residents who responded to surveys tell a concerning story: 73% say the Liberal government has not eased their cost of living challenges since the Prime Minister took office; 57% say affordability is their top concern; and 62% believe Canada is headed in the wrong direction. Even 40% of Liberal supporters

say so, all while this week the Prime Minister had the audacity to gaslight, saying Canadians are “getting ahead”.

Oshawa food banks, such as Feed the Need and Simcoe Hall, are seeing record demand beyond pandemic levels. After years of promises and photo ops, the affordability crisis has become a health crisis.

Oshawa families are not asking for more supports or food programs. They want dignity, and they want relief. They need action now.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I move on to the next member, there are members having a conversation. I invite them to go to the courtyard to continue their conversations. We are still doing Standing Order 31 statements.

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GREGORIA ROUBEKA MERZIOTIS

Peter Fragiskatos (London Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour the incredible life of my dear aunt, Gregoria Roubeka Merziotis, who passed away recently at the age of 97. She was the mother of Vassili, the mother-in-law of Kim, the devoted grandmother of Gregory and Leonida, the sister of Costadino, and of course, the extremely devoted wife of Leonida.

She was born in 1928 in Halki, Greece, and came to Canada in 1957. She worked for more than 30 years on Chabanel Street in the garment district of Montreal, where she was so dedicated that she was recognized time and again for her contributions to her work. She raised her family that way.

She will, above all, be missed for her devotion to the family, for her faith, for her abiding love for her family and, certainly, for her abiding love of Greece and of Canada. She was a remarkable Canadian.

Thank you very much, Thia Ritsa, for everything.

* * *

● (1115)

FUEL TAXES

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are struggling. Filling up the car to get the kids to school and to get to work is becoming a stress for Canadian families. Conservatives have put forward a plan to put money back in the pockets of hard-working Canadians, which is to suspend all federal taxes on fuel, saving roughly 25¢ a litre, which would be over \$1,200 a year saved for a family of four.

Now, the Prime Minister wants to pretend that full relief would somehow blow a hole in the deficit. That is simply not true. Even the Liberals' own former economic adviser Tyler Meredith estimated that, for every \$10 increase in oil prices, there is roughly \$2 billion in extra federal revenue.

With the extra increase in federal revenue coming from rising oil prices, all we are asking the Liberals to do is give back the money that they did not earn. Canadians are already paying about 20% more than Americans at the pumps, despite the fact that they are facing the same global pressures. Families here are paying more, and Liberal taxes are to blame. Why will the Liberal government not give Canadians the full relief that they need at the pumps?

* * *

[Translation]

MEMBER FOR TERREBONNE

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to highlight a remarkable victory that is breathing new life into our community. In Terrebonne, Tatiana Auguste has distinguished herself, proving that talent, determination and hard work lead to great results.

Through her dedication and perseverance, she has become a source of inspiration. This success is not hers alone. It also belongs to a proud, dynamic, and supportive community. It also reminds us that behind every success lies tireless effort and a deep commitment to excellence. In a world full of challenges, stories like this remind us of the importance of believing in our abilities and pursuing our dreams with confidence.

On behalf of the House, I would like to offer her my heartfelt congratulations and wish her every success.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, facts are facts. Canadians do not live in the world of advertising. They live in the real world, which is becoming increasingly difficult. Indeed, 60% of Canadians are saying that price increases are giving them financial whiplash. The rising costs of essentials like gas and food are putting significant strain on the finances of 75% of Canadians. In addition, 40% of Canadians are afraid of losing their jobs.

Why do the Liberals keep taxing Canadians and spending their money on their ideological agenda or, worse, handing out cheques worth mere crumbs to improve Canadians' purchasing power, when it was in fact their own money that was taken from their pockets?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is ideological about our decision to lower the price of groceries, lower the price of oil and lower taxes in this country? On the contrary, it is pragmatic. That is exactly what we are doing as a federal government, as the Liberal Party. We know that Canadians need help. That is why we are here.

Oral Questions

Not only that, but we have some good news. In the meantime, wage growth in Canada has outpaced, if not doubled, the rate of inflation. Our plan is working.

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I received the following message from Anthony. His words clearly illustrate the reality facing our young people.

I am 23 years old and have been working as a carpenter for four years now. I still live with my parents and I'm very lucky. I don't dare hope that I'll ever own my own home. Not having my own place also means giving up on the idea of starting a family.

I receive dozens of messages like this every week, and it shows that our young people have lost hope.

Why, after 11 years of Liberal policies, is everything more expensive? Why are our young people losing hope for the future in a country that is as wealthy as Canada?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will be there for Anthony; we will be there for all young people across the country.

That is why, today, the Prime Minister is meeting with the Premier of Quebec, because we will be there to help build more homes across Quebec and across the country. That is also why we have eliminated the GST for first-time homebuyers. That is also why we are here to support young families.

Meanwhile, what are the Conservatives doing? They are voting against all the measures currently in place to help young people across the country.

• (1120)

[English]

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we were to listen to the Liberals, we would think that Canada is going through some kind of an economic boom. The reality is so far from that truth, as 43% of Canadians are now saying that they are within \$200 of not being able to make ends meet. This is despite all of the programs they continuously announce and reannounce. This is despite doubling the deficit.

When will the Liberals realize that, whatever medicine they are trying to give to fix the Canadian economy, it is not working?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question is about more or less. The Conservatives want us to believe that they would actually do more for Canadians but, every chance they get, they would do less. They would do less on child care. They would do less on dental care. They would do less of an income tax cut. They would do less investing in infrastructure, less investing in housing and less investing in defence.

Oral Questions

In every category growing the economy and helping Canadians get through tough times, they would do much less than the government does. That is clear from their voting record, and it is clear from the things they say in the House. Canadians will not be manipulated.

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we want to talk about manipulation, manipulation is telling Canadians that they have never had it so good. It is the definition of gaslighting. That is what the Liberals do every single day in the House of Commons. They deny the facts.

Members can think about it, as 43% of Canadians are saying they are within \$200 of not being able to make ends meet. That is one minor car repair. That is one tiny repair to their house. They are then on the verge of going bankrupt. This is what 10 years of Liberal policies, which have doubled the deficit, have done.

When will they realize that whatever they are trying to do is not working?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can rest assured that the Conservatives would do much less in every category. They pretend, in the House, to say that they would do more.

Let us just take food prices for example. We have cut, just recently, 10¢ per litre off gasoline at the pump. That is in addition to 18¢ cut earlier in this government's mandate. That is 28¢ per litre, which is more than what the Conservatives have proposed.

We have moved forward with the groceries and essentials benefit, which is worth almost \$1,900 for the average Canadian family. The national school food program—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Lethbridge.

* * *

TAXATION

Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government can continue to make false claims, or it can actually take real action on behalf of Canadians.

The reality is that single moms are struggling, families are struggling and seniors are struggling just to be able to make ends meet. Sixty-four per cent of them say that they are working harder but still falling further behind. That is not the type of Canada that we want, and I think, I would hope at least, we would all agree to that.

We put forward a proposal to take off 25¢ per litre at the pump. This government responded by taking an itty-bitty little amount, 10¢ per litre, off at the pump, which means, really, no savings at all, because this summer gas prices will be increased by 10¢ a litre at the pump.

Why would this government not take Canadians seriously and actually give them a real break?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities),

Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is talking about what is false. Let me tell her what is true.

This Monday, a federal break on the excise tax on fuel comes into effect, which is going to save Canadians 10¢ at the pump. That is true. That is on Monday. Canadians are going to feel that when they pull into the gas station.

The Conservatives can stand up and they can rail against the programs that we are legitimately putting in place to help Canadians, but they stand up in opposition to them every single time.

Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. member is willing to recognize that they have agreed to take only 10¢ a litre off at the pump. Meanwhile, summer gas prices will go up by 10¢ a litre, which means that, really, Canadians are saving absolutely nothing.

Meanwhile, the Conservative plan was to take off 25¢ a litre at the pump. That is real savings. That makes a real difference. That is what Canadians want.

Will the Liberals take Canadians seriously and actually make a real difference? Axe the tax.

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, as the member opposite should know, the combined effect of what the Liberals have done is that we have actually saved Canadians 28¢ at the pump when we cancelled the carbon tax and now, as of Monday, with an additional 10¢ that we are taking off because of the removal of the federal excise tax.

Being in government gives us the privilege and the honour of serving Canadians to make a real difference in their lives. These are real policies that are going to hit Canadians' wallets at a time when we know they are concerned about affordability.

* * *

• (1125)

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during a ceremony held yesterday to commemorate the repatriation of the Constitution—an event known in Quebec as the night of the long knives—the Minister of Justice dropped a bomb. He announced that no matter which way the Supreme Court rules on the notwithstanding clause, he will take action to constrain it before the court even renders its decision.

He announced that if Quebec is unhappy about it, he will attack Quebec's powers. Does he think he can bend Quebec's democracy to his will? Who does he think he is?

Oral Questions

Patricia Lattanzio (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice's comments will always support the fact that this government is the party of the charter. We are always going to protect the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, just a few hours before the new Premier of Quebec's first visit, the Minister of Justice announced that he would be cracking down on the notwithstanding clause. He is going to limit the right of Quebec's elected officials to pass laws that Quebecers voted for. He is going to target secularism, the protection of the French language and all of our societal choices that are different from those of Canada.

Is that how Quebec deserves to be welcomed to Ottawa?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is some good news. The Premier of Quebec is indeed in town, and we are going to work together to defend Quebecers and Canadians. We will do so knowing that we are proud to have a Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that has been in effect for over 40 years and that has protected Quebecers and Canadians since the Constitution was repatriated.

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the very day that the Premier of Quebec is visiting Ottawa, the Liberals are announcing that they want nothing less than the right to veto societal choices made by Quebecers. They are announcing that if the Supreme Court decision comes down against their attacks on secularism and the notwithstanding clause, they are going to take matters into their own hands. Their highly engineered majority is not even official yet, and this is how they are behaving. I wonder what the future will hold.

Will they reconsider this total lack of respect for Quebecers?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our position on the issue is well known. We have said it again and again. Today, there is good news. Why? We are welcoming the second woman Premier in Quebec's history to Ottawa. Our objective is to protect jobs, create more jobs and improve the living condition of Quebecers in the midst of a tariff war. Good news: We will be hard at work.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with elbows firmly down, the Prime Minister made a promise to Donald Trump to invest a trillion dollars into the United States. The promise was kept. An RBC statement shows that a trillion dollars of investment has fled Canada. The Liberal policies have caused the largest exodus of capital in Canadian history. Canadians are paying the price, with 74% saying that fuel and food costs are straining their finances, and 43% saying they are \$200 away from economic ruin every single month.

Why are Canadians paying the price for the Prime Minister's promises to Donald Trump?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is picking and choosing from that very RBC report he is reporting. When we look at it, the same report mentions that "Canada is back on the radar of global investors. Last year, foreign direct investment in Canada reached nearly \$100 billion, the highest level since 2015."

It was in the news this morning. We will host an investment summit. The entire world is invited to come to Canada on September 14 and 15. We will invest, we will create jobs and we will grow this country.

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Liberals make more promises and more announcements, they are driving farmers into the ground. Farmers lost \$3.3 billion in 2024 and are expected to lose another \$30 billion over the next decade, yet the Liberals continue to double down, closing research centres, imposing a fertilizer import tax and increasing the industrial carbon tax. This is why 75% of farmers are telling their kids not to take over the family farm, and 84% of farmers think the Prime Minister has been an epic failure.

Why not remove all of the tariffs and all of the fuel taxes and give farm families a fighting chance?

• (1130)

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): As usual, Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives do not actually read the reports they quote in this House. As the Minister of Industry said, that RBC report on foreign investment said that "Canada is back on the radar of global investors" and has attracted over \$100 billion, "the highest level since 2015." We also have a number of commitments from other countries, including Australia and the U.A.E., with over \$80 billion of new investment.

Just this week at the finance committee, we had our largest pension plan say that "Canada is at the right place at the right time" to attract global—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Parkland.

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TAXATION

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after a decade of Liberal policies driving up the cost of living, Canadians are being squeezed like never before. According to the consumer debt index, 61% of Canadians say that they are experiencing financial whiplash, and 64% say that they are working harder than ever but cannot get ahead.

Instead of providing relief to struggling Canadians, the Liberals voted against removing taxes of 25¢ a litre for fuel and are driving up the cost of fuel and groceries. Why will the Liberals not provide real relief instead of one-third of the tax cut for one-third of the year?

Oral Questions

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every single day in this House, this government works toward making life more affordable for Canadians, authentically making every effort and taking every step to ensure that Canadians can get through the challenging times that our economy is experiencing due to global shocks.

Canadians know that our government is stepping up with real support. The groceries and essentials benefit is almost \$1,900 for families. If we just take child care, it saves families almost \$1,200 a month on average. We have just cut the GST on new home purchases, as well, so that young people can get into the housing market. We are going to continue—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Parkland.

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, do members know who is not struggling? It is the federal government, which is bringing in windfall taxes on Canadian fuel costs. Canadians are telling us loud and clear that they are struggling. They are cutting back. They are delaying major life decisions. They are worrying about whether they can pay their bills each month.

Instead of providing real relief, the Liberal government is driving up inflation. Despite windfall revenues from soaring gas prices, the government is giving Canadians only one-third the tax cut for one-third of the year. After a decade of the Liberals' policies, even middle-class families are failing to get ahead. It is time to give Canadians a real break. Why will they not?

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, Canadians are going to get a real break on Monday, when they see the prices drop at the gas pump by 10¢ a litre with the federal excise tax on fuel coming off.

It is not just about families. For the member opposite, let me also remind him that by removing this excise tax we are also helping businesses. We are helping businesses in food production, in agriculture, in construction and in transport. Those businesses now can confidently hire. They can confidently build. That helps Canadians too.

Roman Baber (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one in four Canadians is skipping meals. MNP says that one in three Canadians cannot pay their bills.

The Conservatives offered a real solution: cut all federal gas taxes to give Canadians a break at the pumps. It would cost about a third of what the Liberals spend on foreign aid. However, now the Liberals claim to be fiscally prudent. The Prime Minister offered us a lesson on deficits. That is after doubling Trudeau's deficit to almost \$80 billion.

Why do the Liberals not admit that Canadians are suffering and axe the GST and the clean fuel regulations on gasoline?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that Canadians have had a tough

go of it, and that is one of the reasons why, over the past year, our new government has been absolutely focused on bringing down the cost of living for Canadians. They are going to feel that this Monday when they see prices drop at the gas pumps because we are removing the federal excise tax on fuel. That is a big deal.

We also know that Canadians are looking forward to the new groceries and essentials benefit that we are providing. That benefit is going to help families with over \$1,800 this spring. This is a complex challenge but—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for York Centre.

Roman Baber (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals should tell that to the one in 10 Torontonians lining up at food banks. MNP found that almost half of Canadians are \$200 away from insolvency. How is it that, in a country that is so rich in natural resources, more than one in five children go hungry? It is because of the Liberal tax-and-spend policies. It is because the Liberals suffocate our oil and gas and give away our money to their friends and to foreigners.

Why do they not steal another Conservative idea and cut all federal taxes on gas so Canadians can afford to eat?

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, it is more than a bit rich to hear the member opposite talk about kids going hungry when that party will not vote in favour of a national school food program to save their lives. We are the last country in the G7 to have a permanent national school food program, which will help nearly half a million kids in this country not go to school hungry.

If the member is truly concerned about the plight of kids in our country being hungry, why will he not make sure that they have a healthy meal when they go to school in the morning?

• (1135)

Kathy Borrelli (Windsor—Tecumseh—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, young Canadians are being hit the hardest by this Liberal-created cost of living crisis. One in five Canadians aged 18 to 34 cannot even pay their tax bill without going into debt. At the same time, nearly 75% are cutting back on spending just to survive, and still the Liberals voted against the Conservative plan to lower taxes on gas and groceries.

Why will the Liberals not cut taxes on gas and food to make life more affordable?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): To govern is to choose, Mr. Speaker. I want to commend the member. She is a relatively newly elected member. I want to commend her for her propensity to do what Conservatives do, which is to constantly cite problems but never solutions.

What would the Conservatives do? We see what we are doing. We are embracing the resource economy. We are ensuring a foundation for the future so that young people can get ahead. The Conservatives would cut every program that exists with respect to youth. They would get rid of the Canada child benefit, or very close to it. They do not want to support child care, dental care, the beginnings of pharmacare or any of these programs. They only want to identify problems.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, federal funding for active transport is suffering from a lack of government action.

Across Quebec, towns and organizations have submitted projects and bids, but there has been radio silence from Ottawa. Salaberry-de-Valleyfield has until April 21, next Tuesday, to start work on a bike path. Otherwise, the price guarantee for the work will expire, the town will have to put it out to tender again and it will cost more.

How is it possible that, with just four days to go before the deadline, the town still has not heard anything? It has been waiting for a response for two years now.

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are at the negotiating table; we are in discussions with Quebec. We are committed to working with our provincial counterparts to ensure that our communities are connected by robust and reliable public transport and active transport services.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what is happening in Valleyfield with funding for active transportation is happening all across Quebec.

In Saint-Charles-Borromée, for example, it is too late. The federal government missed the deadline to approve the city's projects, and now the city has to start the proposal process over again and will likely end up paying more. No matter how much we press the Minister of Infrastructure and his parliamentary secretary, we are told this is under review. How ironic that Ottawa is completely inactive on the active transportation file.

When will Quebec's cities and organizations receive confirmation that they are getting funding?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right. We are working on solutions to support active transportation throughout Quebec. The minister is actively working on this file. He just responded to

Oral Questions

my colleague. The Prime Minister and the Premier of Quebec are meeting today. We know this is a priority, and we will help my colleague in Valleyfield, but we will also help communities across Quebec because we know we have to be there for our public transit companies.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are understandably outraged to learn that, after 10 years of Liberal governance, the Canada Revenue Agency is sending \$5-million cheques to fraudsters without conducting any checks. They are also outraged at the secretary of state's flippant response when he was questioned about this yesterday.

Just yesterday in Washington, the minister, the real Minister of Finance and National Revenue, told CBC that he was going to look into it. I have a very simple but very specific question for the government.

How many millions of dollars have been given to fraudsters without any checks being conducted?

[English]

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite the contrary. We take any abuse of the tax system not lightly but very seriously. It is obviously illegal to take advantage of the tax system. The CRA takes enforcement action when instances of abuse are identified. While we cannot comment on specific cases that are matters before the courts, obviously opposition members can see documents when they are publicly available.

The CRA has implemented additional safeguards to help ensure greater consistency and accuracy in the refund process.

• (1140)

[Translation]

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, they do not take the cases of honest Canadians seriously.

Let us look at an example that is happening right now in Quebec. A Canadian veteran who pays his taxes had to wait years before getting a proper ruling on the issues that he was having with the Canada Revenue Agency. The CRA owes him \$20,000. When was that ruling given? It was handed down on July 17. Nine months later, this citizen has still not seen a penny of that money. It has been nine months, and the CRA has not been able to issue a cheque in all that time.

Is the government aware that it is mistreating honest Canadians while rolling out the red carpet for fraudsters?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CRA deals with millions of tax filings and does its very best to ensure a high quality of service. There have been improvements to that service over the last year, since the government has been in power.

Any abuse of the tax system is illegal. The CRA takes enforcement action whenever it can identify instances of abuse. We certainly cannot comment on cases that are before the courts. Obviously, opposition members will be able to refer to any information that becomes public, and the CRA is implementing more safeguards in its processes.

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*[Translation]***FIREARMS**

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks, I have travelled across Quebec, meeting with hunters, sport shooters, enthusiasts like myself. They are honest, law-abiding people. They are angry about Bill C-21, the Liberals' gun confiscation law, because they are being treated like criminals. The Liberals are wasting nearly \$1 billion while real crime is skyrocketing across the country. With zero results and zero impact, this law is a total failure.

Will the Minister of Public Safety admit that his law is a boondoggle? Will he scrap it?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

[English]

Let me just say that the enrolment period for the assault-style firearms compensation program was complete, with over 67,000 firearms that have been declared. This is a program that essentially will ensure that prohibited firearms are off our streets. We know that the Province of Quebec is an integral part of the program, and we are grateful for its support.

The business component of the program just opened up, and we will be able to complete the program in a timely manner.

[Translation]

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is pure disinformation.

The Liberals claim it is voluntary. Is that really the case? People are paid if they hand in their weapons before March 31. From April to October, they will not get a penny, and if they still have their gun on October 31, they are a criminal. This law is far from being voluntary. It is abusive; it is undemocratic. The problem is not the gun; it has always been the person holding the gun. That has always been the issue.

Will the minister scrap this abusive law, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not have to explain to my Quebec colleagues the impact of guns in their communities. We know that École Polytechnique had significant consequences. Many women were killed. We know that the program is important to ensure the safety and security of Canadians. We will move forward on a business buyback program that will open up, and we will complete the program as contemplated.

* * *

TAXATION

Gaétan Malette (Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the excise tax was removed for the people of northeastern Ontario, but they need more. The farmers of Matheson and Val Gagné need more help today. The gold miners of Kirkland Lake, Cochrane, Timmins and Chapleau need more help today. The loggers of every village in northeastern Ontario travelling hundreds, at times thousands, of kilometres per day need urgent help.

Will the government use the extra, unbudgeted revenues from royalties and taxes to further lower gas and diesel prices to help people today?

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important to state first of all that our farmers across the country are doing great work for Canada's food security, food autonomy and food sovereignty.

Yes, reducing the price of gas will really help farmers, but we are not stopping there. We are there to support their innovation with a tax credit, a superdeduction that will help them modernize their facilities. We need to do a lot more here in Canada to process more and grow the sector, and we are there with farmers.

* * *

● (1145)

HOUSING

Giovanna Mingarelli (Prescott—Russell—Cumberland, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on making housing more affordable and helping more Canadians find homes in communities across the country. We are working with partners at every level to strengthen housing supply and support the delivery of more affordable housing from coast to coast to coast.

Can the Minister of Housing share how the Build Canada Homes approach will help us continue to increase the supply of affordable housing across the country and deliver more results for Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are tackling Canada's housing challenges with urgency and innovation. Build Canada Homes is already showing what is possible when we work in strong partnership with provinces, territories, local governments and community builders. We have agreements in place with many provinces. We have over 10,000 homes under way.

What we can do now is pass the Build Canada Homes act in the House. I would urge all members, in these busy four weeks ahead, to support its swift passage so we can scale up, build Canada homes and build more affordable housing.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the CRA paid out a \$5-million return to a fraudster who typically earns \$50,000, despite its having identified clear red flags. Even more concerning is that this happened six months after the finance minister appeared before committee to testify on the CRA's history of issuing millions of dollars of payments to fraudsters. He assured Canadians that the safeguards would be in place.

Did the CRA, once again, issue a \$5-million return on a clearly fraudulent claim under the Liberal government's watch, yes or no?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that any abuse of the tax system is completely illegal and unfair to Canadians, and we take those matters seriously. The CRA has implemented additional safeguards to help ensure greater consistency and accuracy in refund processing. We also strengthened controls, intensified oversight and tightened authority levels. We will continue to strengthen the integrity of our tax system and protect taxpayer dollars.

This matter is before the courts, and I cannot comment further on it.

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every dollar that the Liberals hand out to fraudsters was first a dollar earned by and taken from a hard-working Canadian, but the Liberals do not want to answer questions on this matter. Shame on them, because in the past 10 years, \$37 million has been paid out in the gold mine scandal, and there has been \$40 million in bogus claims in 2023 and another \$6 million in 2024. However, if a Canadian misses \$100, the CRA comes down hard on them, and it takes months to correct.

How can anyone have any confidence in the Liberal government if this is how—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said numerous times that any abuse of our tax sys-

tem is illegal and unfair. It is certainly something the CRA takes very seriously and our government takes seriously.

Enforcement action is under way here. There is an attempt to address the issue. The matter is before the courts, which we cannot comment on, of course. Additional safeguards have been put in place. I have already given the member details on that, and that is all I will say for today.

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is just two weeks away from the tax deadline, and we had better cross our t's and dot our i's, because we all know that the CRA gives no quarter to ordinary Canadians, but there is a good chance a fraudster might walk away with a couple million dollars. In fact it was reported this week that the CRA once again paid out millions of dollars to a fraudulent claim. This is not new. It has been happening for years.

In fact in the last Parliament, the minister responsible said, "We have zero tolerance for fraud in all of its forms." If that is really true, will the minister take responsibility and hold himself and the CRA accountable?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already answered this question multiple times today, but I will just add that when debt is established to the CRA, the agency takes legal action if necessary, using all available measures to ensure compliance. To safeguard taxpayer information and prevent misuse, the CRA has strong controls in place to verify accounts and transactions. The agency also collaborates with law enforcement and financial institutions, uses advanced data analytics and deploys dedicated teams to detect and respond to suspicious activity.

* * *

• (1150)

TAXATION

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if anything that was said were true, this would not be happening, but it has been happening for six years and continues to happen.

This tax season will be particularly tough for young Canadians, because 20% of them, one in five, say they cannot pay a tax bill and would have to go into debt to do it. Liberal policies are unfairly burdening young Canadians, the next generation, driving a wedge between parents and children, boomers and millennials, and more.

Oral Questions

One small measure that would help is our plan for a full tax cut on the gas, a full 25% for a full year. Why will the Liberals not do that?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already said multiple times that abuse of our tax system is illegal. The CRA takes enforcement action when it can identify suspicious activity. Safeguards have been put in place.

The matter that the member is referring to is before the courts, and I cannot comment further, obviously.

Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after more than a decade of Liberal policies, life is unaffordable. The latest MNP consumer debt index report states that 70% of British Columbians say rising food prices and gas prices are straining their finances. The Liberals voted against reducing taxes that increase the cost of gas by 25¢ a litre. They voted against removing taxes on food that drive up the cost of groceries.

Why will the Liberals not provide Canadians some relief by adopting our Conservative plan to cut taxes on gas and food, and make life more affordable for Canadians?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are doing a lot of work right now in B.C. to lift up people, particularly young people, with the break on new home purchases for first-time homebuyers, a GST break of up to \$50,000. There is also a housing supply bonus going out to the provinces and territories to help reduce the cost of housing, which is the number one driver with affordability.

When we look at the cost of housing, we see that we have more work to do with Build Canada Homes and many other initiatives on housing. We are delivering those in earnest.

Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal plan is making life unaffordable. Of respondents to my recent survey to every household across Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, 94% say life has become less affordable over the past year. Rebeca replied that she works full-time at a good job but can barely afford groceries. She does not have any kids, because she cannot afford to.

Why will the Liberals not provide some relief by adopting our Conservative plan to cut taxes on gas and food, and make life more affordable?

Hon. Randeep Sarai (Secretary of State (International Development), Lib.): Speaker, when I speak to British Columbians, including Rachel from my riding, they thank me for the Canada child benefit. Rachel also remembers that when the program was under the Conservatives, she had to pay taxes on it when it came to April. She also thanks me for the dental benefit that is helping her and her children get dental care. She is also looking forward to our affordability measure that is coming out for her groceries in June. In addition to that, the 10¢ tax relief at the gas pump is helpful.

We are listening to Canadians, and they are getting what they need. The Conservatives are not listening to Canadians and should—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond Centre—Marpole.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Chak Au (Richmond Centre—Marpole, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the City of Richmond has written to the federal government repeatedly, most recently just two weeks ago, asking for a clear commitment to defend private property rights in the Cowichan land claim. Homeowners are worried. Investors are pulling out. People are asking if their homes are still secure, yet the Liberals have offered no clear answer.

Why is the Liberal government ignoring Richmond city council and abandoning the people of Richmond?

Hon. Rebecca Alty (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working with the City of Richmond and will be providing a response to the letter.

The Conservatives are trying to re-litigate this very serious court case using partisan political attacks, which could seriously undermine the legal process and the work we are doing. They are taking the longest civil court case in Canadian history, over 500 days, and boiling it down to a social media clip. While they are focused on party politics, we are focused on appealing this decision and advancing all legal arguments to protect private property where it matters, in front of—

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is secrecy, uncertainty and anxiety. Between the Cowichan Tribes decision and the Musqueam agreement, the Liberals and NDP have managed to throw private property rights into question for thousands of British Columbians. We need a game plan in this country on how we are going to get from where we are today to reconciliation in an affordable, reasonable manner, but the Cowichan Tribes decision is going to take years to wend its way up to the Supreme Court, while Canadians are left wondering whether their homes are truly theirs.

I ask the Prime Minister, what is the plan to restore confidence in fee simple home ownership, and when are we going to have genuine resolution and—

● (1155)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary to the minister.

Oral Questions

Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear about a few things. First of all, our government has been opposed to the B.C. Supreme Court decision, which is why we are appealing that decision. However, let us also understand a few other things. Not a single negotiation, not a single agreement with a first nation since the 1970s has resulted in a single Canadian losing any of their private property.

The Conservatives are fearmongering, they are spreading misinformation and they are causing disruption in the economy of British Columbia.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member says he disagrees with the decision and is appealing, but appeals are not do-overs, as the minister should have been told by her lawyers. The “raise it or lose it” principle is a core feature of how our legal system works. One cannot raise a new argument on appeal if one did not raise it at trial. My dad used to refer to this as the “you snooze, you lose” rule. In Cowichan Tribes, the Liberals instructed government lawyers not to argue that fee simple title supersedes all other kinds.

Can the minister explain how the government is going to win an appeal with an argument it is not entitled to make?

Hon. Rebecca Alty (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, preserving the certainty and stability of private property is of utmost importance, and that is why we will advance all legal arguments to protect them. We disagree with the B.C. Supreme Court's ruling, and that is why we appealed this back in September. This is being appealed by the federal government, the province, the city of Richmond, the Musqueam first nation, the Tsawwassen first nation and the Cowichan first nation.

However, as a government, we always prefer to negotiate instead of going to court. I can tell this House that in all of our negotiations dating back to the 1970s, no agreement between the federal government and first nations—

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Honoré-Mercier.

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SPORT

Eric St-Pierre (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with less than two months to go before the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup kicks off, Canadians from coast to coast to coast are feeling the excitement.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for Sport tell the House how our government is helping communities across the country take part in this historic moment?

Madeleine Chenette (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and to the Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my athletic hon. colleague for his question. The year 2026 is Canada's year of sport, and we are bringing the excitement of the World Cup to communities across the country. Through the “Canada Celebrates” tour, communities from coast to coast to coast will share in this moment of national pride. Our gov-

ernment is also investing to support the host cities and deliver a safe and welcoming World Cup.

Go, Canada, go. This summer, let us celebrate sport in every city and encourage our young people to get active.

* * *

[*English*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the transport minister said that anyone who speaks out against the land expropriation, environmental devastation or sham consultation in its \$90-billion Alto project should be ashamed. I will tell this House that I am proud to stand with people like Dave Brown, his wife Carole, the Brown's Marina and the people of Chaffey's Lock, Rideau Lakes and Eastern Ontario who are rightly fearful for their family homes, their farms, their businesses and their way of life.

The Liberals have an opportunity to do the right thing and to cancel a project that's going to devastate communities as well as families, just like Dave and Carole.

Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it, this is a transformational project initiative for Quebec and Ontario, putting thousands of people to work, using Canadian workers, Canadian companies and Canadian businesses. At the same time, in terms of this large-scale project, we take consultation very seriously. We have met with 10,000 stakeholders. We will do more because it is the right thing to do. We will work with all Canadians to make this project happen.

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister said, “We're going to...move that train as fast as we can”, and he said the quiet part out loud.

The Liberal government is going to breeze right past the very real concerns of families, farmers, small businesses and people who just want to live the way that they thought they could in eastern Ontario, but instead we are seeing a project that is going to devastate the environment in areas like the Frontenac Arch Biosphere and UNESCO-recognized world heritage sites.

Why are these Liberals disregarding the rights of Canadians for a vanity project? They should do the right thing and cancel the \$90 billion.

Oral Questions

• (1200)

Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it, when it comes to nation-building projects, the Conservatives practise fear and loathing while we practise hope and action. We do that by consultation with each and every stakeholder group in Ontario and Quebec. Why? It is the right thing to do. They are a part of the solution. In urban Canada, we think big. In rural Quebec and in rural Ontario, we are also thinking big.

* * *

ETHICS

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister's spokesperson said, "The minister fully respects the screen, meaning he is neither implicated in nor party to any discussions, decisions, or votes related to Alto." Yet the minister introduced, defended and voted on legislation to direct billions of tax dollars to Alto on at least 14 occasions.

How do the Liberals reconcile the statement of the spokesperson for the minister with the minister's actions?

Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister and others have spoken about this, but I will say this, and I will use an Atlantic Canadian analogy, "This is a rather large fishing expedition." In Atlantic Canada we would describe it as "There is no fishing bait, there is no fishing line and there is no fishing pole."

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, men and boys across Canada are facing a health crisis. They feel their physical and mental health issues are overlooked, misunderstood or ignored. Stress and injury are normalized and vulnerability is stigmatized. Too many men and boys suffer in silence, and they are wary of asking for help.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health inform this House about what the government is doing to help men and boys across Canada live healthier lives?

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, supporting the health of men and boys means stronger families, stronger community and a stronger Canada.

That is why the Minister of Health has launched consultation for Canada's first-ever national conversation on men and boys' health. We want to hear directly from Canadians about the challenges men and boys face, and the solutions that could improve lives. I encourage colleagues across the aisle to engage their communities and help shape a strategy that truly reflects Canadians' needs.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week I introduced Bill C-273, the FARM act, to cut red tape and get farmers faster access to proven tools already deemed safe and approved by trusted jurisdictions.

The bill reflects recommendations made by the ag committee on regulatory reform in response to industry concerns about costly delays and lack of access that leave our farmers at a disadvantage. It is a practical, no-cost solution that maintains oversight by delivering results.

Will the Liberals support this common-sense legislation, listen to the recommendations from committee and industry, and get farmers faster access to the tools they need?

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important. Across Canada, we heard farmers, and they want reduced red tape.

I have good news for my colleague. We are doing that. The all-government effort is to reduce red tape, including in agri-food and in agriculture. In committee, we just worked on a report that has several recommendations for our government, and we will be acting upon it.

* * *

[Translation]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every year, Canada has to inform the UN of its performance on greenhouse gases, or GHGs. Usually there is at least one press release, but with this year's shameful performance, we have heard nothing.

Yes, it is shameful because the Liberals reduced GHGs by a paltry 10% when the 2030 target is 45%. That is three and a half years down the road. It is impossible. The Liberals also want to ramp up natural gas pipeline projects like Marininvest. This makes no sense at all.

Are the Liberals finally about to prove that they really do not give a shit?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member used a word that is not permitted in the House.

I am asking the hon. member to withdraw the unparliamentary word.

• (1205)

Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my remark and instead I will say that the Liberals do not give a damn.

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to ask the hon. member to withdraw these remarks after question period.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians voted to strengthen our economy and develop our natural resources while also fighting climate change. We are supporting innovation, we are strengthening our competitiveness and we are making billions of dollars in new investments to achieve net zero. We are going to turn Canada into a clean and conventional energy superpower while reducing our emissions at the same time.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 42 years ago today the Canada Health Act was passed, making it the law across Canada that health care must be provided based on need, not the ability to pay. However, the current Liberal government keeps letting Conservatives break the law.

Danielle Smith's latest plan for two-tiered health care is letting the ultrarich book themselves expensive diagnostic tests and jump the line. Other premiers are watching. What will it take for the government to do its job to enforce the Canada Health Act and to protect public health care for all Canadians?

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will always protect the Canada Health Act and Canada's universal health care system. That is why, with budget 2025, our government is investing in our publicly funded health care system, including a generational investment of \$5 billion to build health care infrastructure.

We are collaborating with our provincial and territorial partners to ensure all Canadians have equitable access to medically necessary care based on their needs, not on their ability to pay. Our government is continuing to engage with the Province of Alberta to better understand the various components and implications of its proposed changes and ensure they align with the principles of the Canada Health Act.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present the first petition from residents of Salmon Arm, British Columbia, a community I am very honoured to represent and live in. The petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to support Bill C-218, to exclude mental illness or disorder from MAID, and to invest resources into mental health services.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also present four more petitions today on behalf of residents of Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies. These citizens call on the Government of Canada to reject any amendment to Bill C-9 that removes the religious exemption from Canada's hate

Routine Proceedings

speech provisions, to protect Canadians' constitutional rights of freedom of religion and to ensure that legislation does not criminalize good-faith religious discourse or teachings.

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind members, who are perhaps standing right now but not seeking the attention of the Speaker, that Standing Order 16(2) still applies, which means one cannot cross between the person speaking and the Chair.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Honoré-Mercier.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Eric St-Pierre (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present my first petition as a member of Parliament on behalf of the residents of Honoré-Mercier. The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House the urgent need for safe, reliable, accessible and efficient public transit in Montreal's east end, where persistent gaps are creating significant barriers in how residents get to school and are hindering employment opportunities for people in the region.

This petition, which is signed by 1,270 people, calls on the government to allocate additional funding to strengthen public transit services in Montreal's east end, including in Rivière-des-Prairies and Anjou. The petitioners are also calling for transitional measures to be put in place in collaboration with the provincial and municipal governments, such as the expansion of the bus rapid transit service, among other things.

I also want to thank Darlene Jean Jacques for her leadership in presenting this petition and for helping ensure that the voices of the residents of Honoré-Mercier and all of Montreal's east end are heard here in the House.

• (1210)

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I received petition e-7071 with 1,634 signatures. It is a petition regarding suspicious deaths abroad and autopsies, lack of advocacy and information for families, and jurisdiction when Canadians harm Canadians abroad.

The citizens and residents of Canada who signed the petition call upon the House of Commons to introduce legislation, commonly referred to as “Kiara's law”, to require mandatory Canadian forensic autopsies in cases of suspicious death abroad; establish enhanced consular advocacy standards for victims and families; and amend the Criminal Code of Canada to affirm Canadian jurisdiction in cases that involve the harm or death of a Canadian by another Canadian outside Canada.

Points of Order

SOUTHERN RESIDENT KILLER WHALES

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition on behalf of concerned residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands. The southern resident killer whale is, as all my constituents are deeply concerned about it, one of those issues that unifies people within all of British Columbia, particularly the coastal Coast Salish territories.

The southern resident killer whale is an extremely endangered species. It is increasingly endangered, as petitioners point out, by additional ship traffic. Every additional Aframax oil tanker from the Trans Mountain pipeline, every additional expansion from the harbour authority in Vancouver—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to interrupt the member. There is a problem with interpretation. I think it may be related to the headset the member is using.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, we had the problem yesterday. I went to IT, and they verified that this one does work and is appropriate.

The Deputy Speaker: I am told that it is not the headset, but the connection the member is using. This is one of the downsides of doing this through an Internet connection.

I will keep speaking to see if perhaps the interpretation will work. Right now, though, the member cannot be interpreted, so we cannot complete the petition being tabled.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I will put on the record my request that we do in the House what we do in committee, which is to let the IT people check ahead of time so this does not happen, please.

The Deputy Speaker: I have consulted with the clerks. The petition is considered tabled as of today from the moment the member rose. The problem with interpretation started a bit after the member started speaking. The issue is, again, the Wi-Fi connection, and that is not resolvable right now.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

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POINTS OF ORDER

ADMISSIBILITY OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS TO BILL C-11

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order respecting six amendments that were adopted in committee during clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-11, an act that would amend the National Defence Act and other acts.

In late January and early February of this year, the Standing Committee on National Defence conducted clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-11. During the course of clause-by-clause consideration, six amendments were proposed that the chair of the committee ruled inadmissible on the grounds that these amendments either exceeded the scope and principle of the bill, as decided at second reading, or infringed on the parent act rule. In each of these cases, the ruling of the chair was challenged and overturned, and each of these amendments was adopted by a majority of members.

On February 9, Bill C-11 was reported to the House with amendments. Now that the bill is before the House, I am rising to challenge the admissibility of the six amendments that were ruled inadmissible in committee and that are now contained in the bill. The six amendments are CPC-1, CPC-10, BQ-2, CPC-16, NDP-4 and BQ-3.

CPC-1 would amend section 10 of the National Defence Act, which was not subject of the content of Bill C-11. In this case, the chair ruled that, pursuant to section 16.75 of the fourth edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, CPC-1 proposed to amend a section of the act that is not before the committee and that the bill did not seek to modify the appointment process of the judge advocate general. Therefore, the chair ruled the amendment was inadmissible on the grounds that it exceeded the scope and principle of the bill.

CPC-10 would have extended the appointment of a victim's liaison officer to assist a victim to the accused. The chair ruled that, pursuant to section 16.74 of the fourth edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the amendment proposed a new concept that went beyond the scope of the bill.

BQ-3 would have expanded the class of persons who are eligible to be appointed as a military judge. The chair ruled that this concept proposed in BQ-3 went beyond the scope of the bill.

CPC-16 would require the chief military judge to be appointed within 90 days of the position's vacancy, and since Bill C-11 would not modify the appointment process of the chief military judge, this amendment seeks to exceed the scope of the bill. The chair ruled that, while the bill would not modify the appointment process of specific positions, the position of chief military judge was not included and therefore the amendment exceeded the scope of the bill.

NDP-4 seeks to ensure that every person involved in the investigation or prosecution has training or experience in trauma-informed approaches. The chair ruled that this amendment proposed a new concept that exceeded the scope and principle of the bill.

Government Orders

BQ-2 would have required the establishment of an inspector general for sexual misconduct in the Canadian Forces, which would not only exceed the scope and principle of the bill but could also infringe on the Crown's financial initiative. The chair ruled that the establishment of a new inspector general was a new concept beyond the scope of this particular bill.

I submit that the committee, in adopting these six amendments, exceeded the scope of the bill or infringed on the parent act rule. A bill that is referred to a committee after second reading may not exceed the scope and principle of the bill fixed at second reading and would obviate the ability to amend sections of the parent act that are not opened in the bill.

Page 649 of the fourth edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, at section 16.74, sets the limitation of amendments moved in committee to a bill that is adopted after second reading. This limitation, which deals with the scope and principle of the bill, reads, "An amendment to a bill that was referred to a committee after second reading is out of order if it is beyond the scope and principle of the bill."

Page 649 of the fourth edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, at section 16.75, provides that an amendment to a bill must always relate to the subject matter of the bill or to the clause under consideration. In respect to the parent act rule, section 16.75 states, "In the case of a bill referred to a committee after second reading, an amendment is generally inadmissible if it proposes to amend a statute that is not before the committee or a section of the parent act".

In light of the foregoing, I would request that the Speaker review the bill as amended and make a determination if the amendments proposed through CPC-1, CPC-10, BQ-2, CPC-16, NDP-4, and BQ-3 either infringe on the parent act rule or exceed the scope and principle of Bill C-11.

Should this be the case, I would request that the Speaker order that the bill be reprinted without the offending amendments for the House's consideration at report stage.

• (1215)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the deputy government House leader. It has been noted, and I will take it under advisement.

Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I just wanted to secure our right of reply with regard to the point of order. We will come back to the House at some point and bring our points with regard to the point of order just raised.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the chief opposition whip. That is noted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

LAWFUL ACCESS ACT, 2026

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, An Act respecting lawful access, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will continue. Part of the challenge in debating legislation like Bill C-22 is that many of the terms involved can sound deceptively benign. Words like "subscriber information" or "metadata" may sound minor, but anyone with experience in digital systems understands otherwise.

Metadata can reveal a tremendous amount about an individual. It can reveal who someone communicates with, when they communicate, where they are located, what services they use and patterns of behaviour that paint a detailed portrait of their private life. In many cases, aggregated metadata can reveal far more than people assume. Over time, it can expose routine relationships, movement patterns and behavioural habits with remarkable precision, often allowing detailed inferences even without access to message content itself.

It is also worth remembering that digital identifiers do not always map neatly onto individuals. An IP address or subscriber record may identify an account holder or Internet connection but not necessarily the person behind specific content. That is one more reason Parliament must proceed carefully when expanding access to such information. When the government proposes mandatory metadata retention, expanded access powers and technical interception capabilities, Parliament must treat those powers with the seriousness they deserve.

This reminds me of the time when, as a young teenager, I was hired at a local Internet service provider, when I was living in Forest, Ontario. I was going to North Lambton Secondary School, and my job after high school was not working at the local grocery store stocking shelves or at the local gas station pumping gas. My first job was working at the local Internet service provider, back in 1996. As part of that role, I was in charge of web development and tech support, and I had access to all of the data for all of the customers. It was not just customers' accounts. There were times I had administrative access and I could see, in real time, where people were going on the Internet. I asked myself, what are the stipulations in protecting this information?

Government Orders

Again, it was 1996, and even though I was an employee, I had the maturity to tell myself this information should be private, should be kept within the company and should not be shared with my neighbours, including my friends at the local high school. It was interesting, as an employee of the local Internet service provider, to walk through the halls of North Lambton Secondary School back in 1996 at age 16. I would see my friends and my peers at school, and I would know where they went on the Internet and also where their parents went on the Internet. Yes, I knew the dirty laundry of Forest, Ontario, and also of Lambton County.

These are precisely the kinds of questions that must be tested carefully at committee to ensure the right balance is struck. We need to balance law enforcement tools with the privacy that Canadians entrust us with under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is not merely about giving police access to isolated records. It is about creating and mandating digital surveillance infrastructure. That requires caution for two reasons.

The first reason for caution is that governments must never simply be trusted to exercise broad powers perfectly. Parliament must legislate based not on ideal assumptions but on real-world experience. Many Canadians remain concerned whenever governments seek expanded powers touching on privacy and civil liberties. That does not mean such powers are never necessary. It means Parliament has a duty to ensure that they are narrowly drafted, proportionate and subject to proper oversight.

The second reason for caution is technical. Bill C-22 would require certain providers to build and maintain technical interception capabilities and retain metadata for up to one year. Every additional repository of retained data creates a target. Every additional access mechanism creates a vulnerability. In cybersecurity, one of the most basic principles is to minimize unnecessary access pathways. Systems are generally made more secure by reducing points of entry, not by multiplying them. Parliament must be cautious whenever legislation proposes to move in the opposite direction.

• (1220)

Those of us with experience in cybersecurity understand a simple reality: Every access point created for lawful use is also a potential attack surface for unlawful exploitation. That concern is becoming more urgent, not less. Artificial intelligence is dramatically accelerating offensive cyber-capabilities. Anthropic recently declined to publicly release one of its most advanced models after reportedly concluding that its ability to identify and exploit software vulnerabilities posed serious security concerns.

Parliament cannot ignore the reality that the tools available to malicious actors are becoming more powerful at an unprecedented pace, so it must ask itself if it is prudent to mandate the creation of more retained data, more interception infrastructure and more potential vulnerabilities if not absolutely necessary. In trying to improve lawful access for investigators, we must be careful not to weaken the broader security of the systems Canadians rely upon. These are complex, technical considerations, and Parliament should take the time to fully examine them before finalizing this framework.

There is also an economic and innovation dimension to this bill. Canada has already seen how digital regulation can produce unin-

tended consequences when burdens are poorly calibrated. Following the passage of the previous Parliament's Bill C-18, Meta chose to block Canadian news content on its platforms rather than comply with the framework Parliament imposed. That is a reminder that large digital firms can and do make strategic decisions about whether operating under Canadian rules is worth the cost.

Even more importantly, while dominant, multinational firms may have the leverage and resources to absorb significant compliance burdens, smaller Internet providers and emerging competitors often do not. If Parliament imposes overly onerous technical requirements, it risks creating barriers to entry, discouraging innovation and entrenching the very largest incumbents at the expense of competition in Canada's digital economy.

These potential impacts should be carefully considered as this bill moves through committee. None of these concerns mean that lawful access reform should not proceed, only that it must proceed carefully. Conservatives believe police should have modern tools.

• (1225)

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. Indeed, it is a pleasure to rise both in my capacity as a parliamentarian for that area and as the shadow minister, or critic, for public safety.

My colleague hit on a number of issues that are confronting Parliament in the form of Bill C-22. We have seen a number of pieces of legislation come through that are related to Bill C-22. Bill C-2 came, then we had Bill C-12, and now there is Bill C-22.

Does my colleague agree that the fact that the government has put forward Bill C-22 is a tacit acknowledgement of the failure of Bill C-2, which we were told would be a cure-all for all things ailing Canadian law?

Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from British Columbia for the question, and yes, I think there is some failure still here. Bill C-22 should go back to committee to balance the tools that law enforcement needs.

Conservatives support law enforcement, but we also have to balance it with the privacy that Canadians expect under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I notice the Liberals are tending to characterize this as obstructionism. We are here in Parliament to do a job, and that job is to question the other side and improve any bill that comes through committee.

I wonder if my hon. colleague could speak to whether he thinks Conservatives are obstructing or improving this bill.

Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, I feel that this bill should go back to committee, based on my technical expertise and my concerns about metadata, storing information on where someone has been on the Internet, location services, etc. I am not including messaging, just metadata itself. There is some concern because, again, it is a balancing act: tools that would be utilized by law enforcement, even with a warrant, and privacy that Canadians cherish under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

• (1230)

Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola.

I feel there is a refrain being heard frequently in the House today, the welcoming of another member from the government to their seat. That is wonderful.

It is always great to speak in the House. I wish we would have more questions from members of the government. For those watching at home, normally the government would have some questions for my hon. colleague on his speech. It is almost like we are shouting into the Grand Canyon. Hello, hello, hello. Is there anybody there, there, there?

Why is it that we, as Conservatives, are carrying this debate?

Hon. Greg Fergus: Hello, hello, hello.

Frank Caputo: Oh, I hear the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer saying hello back, back, back.

How seriously can we take the government when its members are not even getting up to ask questions on a bill this important?

Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the members of the government are not asking questions, because this bill is very important, especially with respect to the balancing of law enforcement with civil liberties.

Another reason this bill is important is the economic impact. Yes, maybe large Internet service providers can absorb the cost of the request within this bill of storing metadata for one year, but it would also affect the economy of Internet service providers because the ability of small and medium-sized Internet service providers or new Internet service providers to offer competition to the Internet industry would be hindered by this—

The Deputy Speaker: I have a point of order from the Minister of National Defence.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that the opposition day designated for Thursday, April 23, has been undesignated and

Government Orders

that the business for that day shall be Bill C-11, an act to amend the National Defence Act and other acts.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LAWFUL ACCESS ACT, 2026

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, An Act respecting lawful access, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak virtually, since a situation came up that prevented me from participating in person. Those are the rules of the House.

[*English*]

I am grateful for the chance to speak to Bill C-22. I do not have lengthy parliamentary experience compared to other members, but I have been a member of Parliament for nearly 15 years, and I have never seen anything like what the government has done in the area of the legislation that we now have before us. It initially came to us in June as Bill C-2, and in that bill there were provisions for access and warrantless access that were combined with “strong borders” provisions, as they were then called.

I just want to draw attention to the process of the legislation, because it is highly unusual. Again, obviously there are people who have more experience. The member for Vancouver Centre, for example, has served far longer than I have, but I have never seen anything like this, for what it is worth. We started with Bill C-2, which was not withdrawn. It remained there, and then it was largely replaced, although it was not withdrawn, by Bill C-12. Now we have Bill C-22, picking up on elements of what was unacceptable in Bill C-2.

I have heard the Prime Minister in press comments talk about the ways the new Liberal majority plans to change our committee composition. Somehow there is a lot of showboating going on, the Prime Minister said, a lot of grandstanding, but honestly, the process of studying legislation has some precedents and parliamentary tradition that really do matter. One is to give a bill proper study. This is interrupted by the innovation of the government in never admitting it has made a mistake or in not amending a bill that is on the Order Paper but rather replacing it with a series of repeated starts and stops.

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I am sure the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, whose humour I enjoyed earlier, might make a comment on this. It is bizarre and certainly unusual. We started with Bill C-2, and then we had Bill C-12, which continued the anti-refugee rights provisions that were in Bill C-2. Now we have moved to Bill C-22, on access, and the bill of course is dealing with access to information that is important for law enforcement.

This is an unusual process, to put it mildly. Today I want to focus on what is in Bill C-22 and on the reasons that I certainly hope the government will go to a more normal parliamentary procedure, which would be to amend Bill C-22 to achieve the kind of consensus that would allow me, as a Green Party member of Parliament, to vote for it. I cannot vote for it as it is now on the Order Paper.

Again, let me step back and say, as I have said in the House before, on the record, that Bill C-22 represents improvements over the portions that were originally put forward in Bill C-2. The original access legislation would have allowed, for instance, postal workers to open our mail, and it would have allowed access to subscriber information from telecommunications companies without notice to the user.

However, while there has been much improvement in requiring warrants, the warrants would still be required to meet a threshold that the hon member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith referred to earlier in debate today. It is a completely unprecedented threshold for a warrant to obtain information and access to information: “reasonable grounds to suspect”. We find that language in proposed subsection 487.0142(2).

• (1235)

“Reasonable grounds to believe” is a well-understood concept. There is much jurisprudence on what is required to have reasonable grounds to believe. There is zero jurisprudence on what it means to have reasonable grounds to suspect. It is a lower threshold. It does not make sense to put legal terms in that have no foundation in law. It would undoubtedly create confusion in how the legislation would be used by law enforcement.

I note that the Liberals have changed the definition of who would be able to access, from police officer to public officer, which would mean that the same terminology could apply to a CSIS agent or a police officer. The judge issuing a warrant, under many of these sections, would merely have to determine if there are reasonable grounds to suspect. Again, there is no background in law for this.

When I say “jurisprudence”, to break that down to common sense, that just means we can go back and look up legal decisions where courts have struggled with what a word means, so the court dealing with the matter before it has somewhere to go to see what the previous judges said. The court can see the record of court cases on this matter so it knows what it is looking for. In this case, with the use of novel terminology, “reasonable grounds to suspect”, people do not know what they are looking for. A judge would have to deal with the issue for the first time, and I think we could say, at a minimum, that this is unwise in drafting.

Where does this leave us now with Bill C-22? There are many improvements, particularly in part one, but there are some concerns with part two, as has been noted by numerous commentators, from

the Canadian Civil Liberties Association to a group called OpenMedia. By the way, I pay a lot of attention to OpenMedia, because it is a very impressive organization as a small non-government organization that worries about Internet access and public policy. It also happens to be headed by an executive director who is one of my constituents. I thank Matt Hatfield from Salt Spring Island for his diligence in working with an organization that represents the concerns of thousands of Canadians.

However, the concerns we have with Bill C-22 continue. The concerns are largely in the one area, and I asked the hon. Minister for Public Safety to entertain amendments on this matter, amendments to understand that if what the bill would require is surveillance capacity from Internet providers, it would mean they would have to permanently insert spyware into the platforms that Canadians use.

This would create access to information about Canadians that would be accessible not only by Canadian public officers and by Canadian intelligence officers, such as from CSIS, but could also potentially be open to surveillance, and that data could be accessed, by foreign governments, including the United States government. A number of Canadians would have concerns about having their personal Internet information accessed by foreign governments. I think that is an unintentional consequence of the way the bill is drafted that needs to be repaired. We do not want surveillance built into the permanent collection of data, which would be required under the terms of the act as it is currently drafted.

I want to make it clear that I would be very pleased to vote for the legislation. I will be preparing amendments and taking them before committee. Although, under the bizarre terms in which I operate on committees, I am not allowed to vote on my own amendments, I hope that other members of the House and members of the committee will show support, and I hope the Minister for Public Safety will improve the bill to bring it to a state where people can vote for it and get it over the finish line.

• (1240)

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker. I rise today just to add clarification to a question I asked earlier regarding Bill C-22. Outside the concerns with regard to the tools used by law enforcement, and also balancing privacy that Canadians feel is important with regard to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, another concern is the collection of data. Part of Bill C-22 is the collection of metadata over one year. Large Internet service providers might be able to take the cost of storing metadata, but for medium to small Internet service providers, it might be a hindrance to their operations. There are also new Internet providers that want to be part of the Internet provider economy. Thus, it might limit competition. This is a concern.

Does the member opposite feel a similar concern?

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Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I think it is the first time my hon. colleague the member for London—Fanshawe and I have had an exchange. I did hear his speech as well. I agree with his concern. For smaller service providers, this could indeed be a burden, so I will just say that I agree.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does my colleague intend to propose any amendments? If so, can she tell us which parts of the bill would be affected? Is there a part of the bill that she thinks needs improvement?

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I will be proposing amendments, particularly with respect to part 2. The best thing would be to remove part 2 as a whole, but in anticipation of the committee's work, I will be preparing amendments to that part.

• (1245)

[*English*]

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just received a message about my earlier Grand Canyon overture, wherein I said, "Hello, hello, hello. Is there anybody there, there, there?" That was because, yet again, the Liberals are not asking any questions on a bill that is of critical importance.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, one of my Liberal friends said I should get credit for special effects. I believe that was what he said from across the way.

I share some of the concerns of my hon. colleague, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, about the bill. It is certainly better than Bill C-2, which was a far overreach. I wonder if she would be prepared to comment on how much of a failure Bill C-2 was and how the bill before us is better but still requires amendments, and if she would be prepared to share where those amendments would come from.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I have a good record. In 15 years, I have never heckled in this place, but I had a very strong temptation to respond and to encourage the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, to inject levity, and say, "Hello, hello, hello" back to him when he made the Grand Canyon comment, which may go down in the annals of parliamentary history as a good way of not breaking our rule of not pointing out who may or may not be present in the Chamber.

The member asked what kind of failure I thought Bill C-2 was. It was a catastrophic failure. It was a bill I never saw over the course of the summer. It was tabled in June. Over the course of last summer, I think 400 different organizations from various points of view, from refugee rights and civil liberties to how to control the Internet and rights to privacy, had a breadth of pulling together a massive coalition to oppose the bill.

On that ground alone, perhaps the Liberal government should be congratulated for never before having launched a bill so bad that 400 civil society groups banded together to stop it. The government, while stopping Bill C-2, never admitted it had made a mistake, again, by using a novel method of ignoring the opposition, ex-

cept to table in September 2025 Bill C-12 and then to table Bill C-22. They all dealt with largely the same subject matter.

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in this place on behalf of the good people of Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna.

A part of me wants to say that we really should not be here, again, having this debate today. It is not just because it is a Friday and not because the debate is unimportant. It is. On the contrary, it is absolutely essential.

Sometimes, in the House, we are our own worst enemy. I say that candidly because this is not the first time Parliament has debated efforts to modernize lawful access legislation. More than 14 years ago, when I sat on the government side of the House, I supported similar initiatives. Before that, the previous Liberal government under Paul Martin attempted and also failed to move this work forward. Each time Parliament fails to act, the cost is not political. The cost is borne by Canadians.

The world has changed how Canadians live, communicate, bank, work and raise families. That has all moved online, rapidly and permanently, but our laws have not kept pace with that reality. That is why it is important to be clear about what this debate is and what it is not. We are not here to debate legislation that allows law enforcement to spy on innocent, law-abiding Canadians without oversight. That is not what Bill C-22 proposes. The core issue before us is how Parliament protects Canadians in an increasingly digital country while respecting the rights and freedoms that define us. Public safety is the most obvious concern. Canadians are being targeted every day by online fraud, identity theft, extortion and exploitation. Seniors have lost life savings. Families have had their identities stolen. Children have been coerced and harmed in ways made possible by anonymity and speed online.

This issue also goes far beyond individual victims. Canada is not only rich in natural resources. We are rich in research, intellectual property, innovation and data. Where is that value increasingly stored and accessed? It is increasingly stored and accessed online. Essential services, banking, health records, commerce and even the operation of the Parliament now depend on digital infrastructure. This is not ideology. It is reality.

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As Canadians move online, our ability to protect them has fallen behind. I often explain it in this way. In the physical world, if there is a hit-and-run accident and a licence plate number is recorded, police can lawfully use that information to identify the registered owner and begin an investigation. That does not give access to private conversations. It simply provides a lawful starting point. Online, even when establishing those basic facts, it can take much longer, while the harm continues.

Bill C-22 is an attempt, imperfect, as all legislation ultimately is, to modernize investigative tools while maintaining judicial oversight. However, I want to pause a moment and address concerns that Canadians have directly raised with me, including constituents who oppose the bill. Some fear that Bill C-22 could require digital service providers to embed surveillance capabilities that may weaken security. Others are concerned about the retention of metadata involving people who are not under investigation. Still others worry that future governments could expand the scope of this law through regulation without sufficient parliamentary scrutiny and oversight.

I understand this mistrust. Too many Canadians feel that governments no longer listen. I did not enter politics to reinforce that cynicism. I entered public life because I believe that trust in our institutions must be earned, and it is only earned through accountability, something that I hope Liberal members of the House also believe in.

As a Conservative, I believe in limited government, in checks and balances, and in a government that thinks of Canadians, not for them. That is why it matters to be very clear about what Bill C-22 does and does not do. It does not authorize warrantless access to private communication. It does not eliminate judicial oversight. It does not give government the power to read the content of Canadians' messages without court approval. Much like wiretap authorities that Canadians have accepted for decades, police must make their case to a judge, meet defined legal thresholds and operate within strict limits. That is not unchecked power. That is the rule of law.

• (1250)

Let me ground this debate in the real experiences Canadians are facing. In my former riding, police investigated a case where a woman was shaken down by scammers claiming to be the Canada Revenue Agency and demanding payment in bitcoin. The officers in Merritt knew a crime had been committed, but they could not quickly determine whether the perpetrators were even in the country. Pursuing charges would have required significant time and resources, resources that many small-town RCMP detachments simply do not have.

In West Kelowna, a retired professional was convinced to install remote access applications on her phone and private computer, unknowingly giving criminals full control over her financial life. She lost more than \$100,000. Even more disturbing, she was told that contacting the police or even her member of Parliament would place her in violation of national security laws. Fear and deception did the rest.

Perhaps the most disturbing are the countless cases supported by organizations like the Kelowna Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, where children who have already suffered abuse endure further

trauma while authorities work urgently to identify, locate and stop the spread of child sexual exploitation materials.

In each of these cases, time matters. Delay magnifies the harm.

RCMP officers in the Central Okanagan are already carrying the highest caseloads in British Columbia. They are not asking for unchecked authority, they are asking for lawful, court-supervised tools that would allow them to establish basic facts quickly and protect victims sooner.

That brings me back to the role of Parliament. I want to address a broader point about how Parliament must legislate in the digital age, because this bill is not unique in facing these challenges. Technology evolves faster than legislation ever can. That creates real tension between clarity and flexibility, and between certainty and adaptability.

Canadians are right to be cautious when laws rely on regulations and technical definitions that may change over time. That caution is healthy in a free society. As Conservatives, we have always believed the answer to that tension is not blind trust in government but strong parliamentary oversight. It is Parliament, not the executive, that must define limits, ask hard questions and ensure delegated authorities are narrow, justified, proportionate and, above all else, accountable.

That responsibility does not end at second reading. It continues at committee, through expert testimony, proposed amendments and rigorous scrutiny of how these powers would operate in the real world. It also continues after passage, through ongoing review and accountability.

Canadians should expect nothing less. Protecting privacy and protecting public safety are not competing ideals. They are complementary responsibilities. When the law is outdated, vague or unclear, both privacy and safety suffer. Criminal networks exploit legal uncertainty far more effectively than law-abiding citizens ever could.

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Our task as legislators is to ensure the law is precise, restrained and grounded in constitutional principles, while still effective enough to protect the people it is meant to serve. Avoiding that challenge altogether is not neutral. It leaves victims exposed, strains already overburdened police services and erodes confidence in the rule of law. That is the biggest challenge we have. When people believe that the justice system is simply catch-and-release, or that if they phone, like the woman in Merritt, and are simply told they do not have the resources, people lose faith in our institutions. That must change, and not just with Bill C-22. We need to see stronger sanctions. We need to see jail, not bail. We need to re-earn the confidence of Canadians who are so disconcerted over the state of our system.

That is why we need to ask the tough questions at committee, get into the weeds and fully understand and weigh the tradeoffs between public safety, privacy and individual liberty. Addressing these concerns transparently is not a flaw in this process; it is Parliament doing its job.

The question before us is whether Parliament will once again allow inaction to become the default or whether we will act carefully, responsibly and within appropriate limits. Our future is undeniably online. If we are serious about protecting Canadians in the future, we must be willing to modernize our laws while respecting people's rights and values.

I believe we can do that. I believe Parliament is capable of getting it right.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Greg Ferguson (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank my colleague from British Columbia for his measured and nuanced speech. He and I agree that it is important to update the laws that protect us in this digital age rather than relying on a legislative framework that predates the invention of the Internet.

My colleague talked about avenues that he would like to explore in committee to delve deeper into some of the issues that he raised. Can he give a specific example of an amendment that he would like to see made to this bill?

Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member for Hull—Aylmer's comments. As members of the House of Commons, it is important that we communicate issues clearly and accurately, especially online. There is also an opportunity to make amendments to improve the bill, depending on the nature of the bill, which could be a private member's bill or a government bill. In this case, we are talking about a government bill.

I hope that, if the member participates in the committee study, he will take a closer look at part 2, especially the techniques, equipment and system proposed in the bill.

• (1300)

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the bill states that fundamental terms will be redefined through regulations. We are talking about terms like “encryption” and “systemic vulnerability”. The plan is to change these terms through regulations without any

debate. These are fundamental terms that allow law enforcement, but also hackers and malicious actors, to access information.

What does my colleague think about the fact that the government set up its bill in such a way as to allow these definitions to be changed through regulations only?

Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, it is essential for the opposition to be able to fulfill the role entrusted to it by Canadians. It is particularly important to demand evidence and ask the government to share its reasoning and thought process, especially that of the minister responsible. It is also important for the opposition to press the government to make improvements and to consider our amendments for the benefit of all Canadians.

[*English*]

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think one of the key points of contention that we could see with this legislation is the requirement for telecom providers to retain individuals' data for up to a year. In the European Union, similar legislation has been brought forward that was found to have violated the privacy rights of European Union citizens, but there are other jurisdictions, such as Australia, that have a two-year limit.

I am wondering if the member would share his thoughts on the worries about the one-year limit on retaining data.

Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak about Internet service providers, ISPs, in general. Obviously, there are going to be some distinctions between other large Internet companies other than ISPs, but I think that for the most part, that is what we are going to be talking about in committee.

Simply, right now it is the Wild West. Some ISPs are retaining data for longer than a year and some are doing it for zero days because there is no particular requirement on them. First of all is having a requirement: We need to decide as parliamentarians what is reasonable. We can look at other jurisdictions to see what they have, but we do need to have rules in place so that we can have the rule of law in this space.

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Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise as the elected representative for the new riding of Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies and the associate shadow minister for fisheries for His Majesty's loyal opposition. Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies is a new riding that was created as of the last election, and I believe it is one of the most majestic ridings across this country, if not the most majestic one. It starts at the Great Divide at the Alberta border, where the last stretches of the CP Rail mainline were completed to connect this country from coast to coast back in 1885. I was a proud employee of CP Rail for a short time in the 1980s and got to see some of those important sections of track.

I want to recognize the importance of all the people who still live in the area and are descendants of employees who built that nation-building railway, which linked us from coast to coast to coast. It is an incredible piece of our history. I am so proud and honoured to represent an area that was so important in being able to complete that link.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-22. This is the third iteration of legislation introduced by the government in this 45th Parliament dealing with this issue. I raise this because it is an obvious indication of the failures of this government and former Liberal governments to recognize what is needed to bring law and order to this country. It is also an obvious indication of the inability of the Liberal government to draft legislation that is effective and properly worded in order to pass the scrutiny of this House. That is the purpose of this House: to scrutinize legislation that is being proposed by the government to make sure that it is the best we can do for Canadians. That is an honourable job we are all elected to do, and we on the Conservative side, as members of His Majesty's loyal opposition, will continue to do everything within our power to make sure legislation introduced by the government is truly the best it can be for Canadians.

The Liberal government first introduced Bill C-2. It has basically been shelved because it was so problematic. Last fall, it introduced Bill C-2, which fell short of protecting Canadians, while overreaching in other areas. Conservatives forced the Liberals to back down on Bill C-2, successfully blocking the Liberals' infringement on individuals' freedom and privacy. We stopped the Liberals from limiting the use of cash, opening mail without oversight and demanding that any service provider, including hospitals, financial institutions and even dry cleaners, disclose user data without judicial oversight. Those are important pieces that have been removed from this bill because we heard from Canadians how important it is that their privacy be respected and, which I would say is the most important piece, that government overreach not be extended to the Liberal government.

Now the Liberals have taken parts out of Bill C-2 and reintroduced them in Bill C-22. Bill C-22 is void of the provisions that Conservatives opposed in parts of Bill C-2. Law enforcement requires the tools they need to combat crime and keep our communities safe, particularly as threats become more sophisticated in the digital age. At the same time, these powers must be accompanied by strong safeguards, clear limits and independent oversight to protect Canadians' rights and freedoms. Conservatives will carefully review this legislation to ensure that the Liberals do not repeat the

past failures. We will also ensure that we hear from experts to further evaluate and improve this legislation. There are experts in the field who know best how a bill will be interpreted, how it may be implemented and what unintended consequences may lie ahead if a poorly drafted bill is allowed to pass. We have seen incidents like that in the past.

● (1305)

I want to take a bit of a sidestep right now to talk about some of the crime stats that have been the result of previous poorly legislated bills passed by a former Liberal government. I will talk about highlights and percentages that are increases since 2015, when the Liberal government came to power, through 2023. Total violent crime is up 49.84%. Total homicides are up 27.75%. Gang-related homicides are up 78.35%. All three levels of sexual assaults are up 74.83%, and for sexual assaults, 90% of the victims are women.

This is concerning. The increase in crime is all in the realm of the past 10-plus years of Liberal governments. I am quoting stats from 2015 to 2023. Those increases resulted from bills like Bill C-5 and Bill C-75, from the first Liberal Parliament, when I was first elected to this place.

I will talk about some of the stats in British Columbia. The total number of violent crime violations was 26,062. That is up to 33,926, an increase of 30%. Extortions went from 359 to 1,592, a 343.45% increase in extortion. Just in British Columbia, we have seen how the Liberals' soft-on-crime policies have led to these problems and increasing problems that continue under the Liberal government's realm. Using a firearm or imitation firearm in the commission of an offence was affected by Bill C-5. Bill C-75 rolled back the issues around bail reform.

I want to step back a bit to earlier in the interventions today when my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola referred to the echo chamber that seems to be in this place today. Even though this bill is a government bill, the government members are not rising to speak to it, not even to ask questions of Conservative members during the questions and comments phases of today's interventions. I raise this because I fear that it is what law enforcement authorities may be perceiving while waiting for legislation so they can do their jobs. Empty echo chambers, from a government that has had over 10 years to address the crime, fraud and corruption, are increasing the impact on Canadians after 10 years of inaction, while criminals are treated more leniently than victims are supported by their own government.

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I revert back to how our debate today echoes with what witnesses repeatedly tell us at committees. The citizens of this country often provide input and good direction for the government, but the government continues to be an echo chamber.

It is high time the government took what it is being told by Canadians and addressed the crime, fraud and corruption that have become a plague in our communities.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech.

I know the minister generously told the House that he would be open to amendments that could improve the bill. Does my colleague have any ideas for an amendment or something that could improve the bill?

[*English*]

Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, we will be looking at this legislation very closely, scrutinizing it closely, like we do with every piece of legislation that comes before the House, to make sure that appropriate amendments are proposed, and hopefully passed, at committee.

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to comment further on this echo chamber, because I find it absolutely fascinating that the government legislation is not receiving any questions or scrutiny from the Liberal members across the way. We have the Speaker looking around the room and only seeing members on this side of the House stand to talk about it. That is important.

We take our job seriously as members of the opposition. What does the member from B.C. think about the Liberals taking their job seriously as members of the government?

Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Oshawa for that really interesting question about the echo chamber. I will mimic my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola when he spoke of the echo, echo, echo chamber in here.

I think it is telling that today there are no questions and no interventions coming from the Liberal side. We can only surmise why that might be, but understanding how the Liberal government operates, there are some members in this chamber at times who are the only ones to speak during the intervention process or present speeches from the government side. Its backbench members are basically muzzled. It sounds like the entire government side is muzzled today on these interventions.

• (1315)

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to get up a third time to ask a question about this bill.

I am glad to hear that the hon. member feels the bill is an improvement over Bill C-2. I would like to know what specific element of change he would like to see in this bill at committee.

Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from the Liberal side for finally being one to stand up. I think he has been the only one in the last while here to present questions.

I am not going to take the liberty to talk about what amendments might be put forward at committee. We will carefully scrutinize the bill. We will listen to the witnesses who are called to committee to testify on the bill, to the stakeholders and to law enforcement, who can hopefully guide all members of the House and the members of the committee on the best way to improve this bill if it needs to be improved.

Michael Coteau (Scarborough—Woburn, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to add to what the Liberal member on this side was asking.

What ideas does the member have? What amendments would you bring forward? We hear a lot of criticism from the Conservatives constantly. We want to hear what amendments and ideas they would bring forward.

The Deputy Speaker: I would just remind members to speak through the Chair. I am not bringing forward amendments.

I invite the member for Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies to offer his comments.

Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, those amendments would be developed during the scrutiny of the bill.

We can see where the language in the bill needs to be clarified, whether with respect to the definitions or how the bill is going to be interpreted. I spoke about that in my intervention.

We could hear from enforcement authorities and from individuals who have been affected by not having this legislation in place so that we can improve the bill.

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we have the opportunity to discuss, debate and advance legislation that is going to address the real challenges facing Canadians, it is important that we do so in a fulsome way. This system that we have, our Westminster parliamentary democracy, gives us all specific roles to play. The government advances government legislation and the official opposition has a duty to test what the government puts before the House before it comes into force. This bill is an example of why it is so important that we have an official opposition in our system. It demonstrates the effectiveness of Canada's Conservatives in holding the Liberal government to account for over 11 years.

We have seen a history that has not changed since the last election, or with the selection and then election of a new Liberal Prime Minister. When Liberals are given the opportunity, they will try to grab as much power as they can with both hands, and they usually do it in times when Canadians need help the most and we are looking, as parliamentarians, to try and find ways to help them, to help Parliament work and to help Canadians.

What we saw with the evolution of the legislative process that led us to Bill C-22 is only the most recent example of that, but it will not be the last. There have been some signals about what is to come.

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If we look back, even at the COVID pandemic, we saw in the House so much uncertainty and so much anxiety about what was going to happen and what the government would need to do. Perhaps there would be runs on banks. The government sought the approval of the House to have the ability to spend without any accountability from this place for a period of time that was without precedence and without limit on the types of things they would spend hundreds of billions of dollars on.

It was a late hour when it was proposed and there was minimal manning in the chamber. There was only a small cadre of government and opposition members from all parties present, and we had to make decisions quickly. The government had the benefit of the full apparatus, including hundreds of thousands of public servants, but the official opposition, without that advantage to give fulsome review to the proposal by the government, pushed back and was able to place limits on the power that the government was looking to grab, which it did not need.

This is an example similar to that. In Bill C-2, we saw, in response to what has been a growing crime problem in our country over the last decade, a solution to problems that we did not have and an effort to suspend the legal rights of Canadians for convenience, I suppose. It would be for the government to justify why it would have needed some of those powers, and it was not able to make the case publicly or in this place, so Bill C-2 did not proceed.

Bill C-12, also known as the Bill C-2 redo, made it through the House and now we have Bill C-22. These are bills born out of that one piece of legislation.

Why did we oppose it? There were provisions on things that the government, as I said, failed to make its case on. Limiting Canadians' ability to use cash in transactions was one of them.

● (1320)

Allowing individuals other than peace officers, without a warrant, to open Canadians' mail was another, as well as having warrantless access to medical records and private electronic communication.

Again, the government did not demonstrate necessity. It did not say that it was born out of a national security imperative or say that the tools we had did not sufficiently solve the problem for which they prescribed this solution. We are looking to get the result that, of course, is going to help with the scourge of crime in our streets. I know that speakers before me have gone through the truly alarming crime statistics. I know that some have offered anecdotes and that some have offered testimony of very real and painful situations for victims of crime.

We could have addressed this many months ago in the way that we are addressing it now, with the bill brought before the House, made better by the opposition who look to, with all parliamentarians, discuss, review, hear from experts, stakeholders and Canadians, and make further improvements and amendments to the bill when it is at committee.

What will the scope of those amendments be? I do not sit on the committee where it will be reviewed. If I have the opportunity to take part in those hearings, I do have some areas that I would look

to examine, including questions that are not answered in the legislative text but would be resolved by regulation. We need to get certainty around what that would look like because that is outside the purview of Parliament. We want to have certainty on a number of things. Protecting Canadians also means protecting their rights. We also need to be protected from government overreach. We all have a duty to do that. I am pleased that we are examining the bill in its latest form. It sounds like it will have support to advance to committee, including from the opposition who helped to sharpen the iron.

What we want to see, at all times here, is that Canadians have in Parliament a mechanism to make things better, where there is a check against it. The balance in the chamber has changed in the last week, with a majority of members now on the government side. If we had been in that situation many months ago, the bill would have passed unchanged. The government clearly believes this to be an improvement.

I started by talking about how government looks to grab power with both hands. We are going to see, over the next couple of weeks, the government looking to undo what it agreed to for the duration of Parliament, and that is the composition of our committees. I want to take my last minute to implore all members, members in the governing party especially, to consider that we are better collectively when we are able to improve on that legislation through a truly collaborative process, and not just simply by majority rule or by diminishing or eliminating the rights of the minority. We need to protect the rights of Canadians.

I look forward to the study of the bill at committee, so that we can do that, especially at this time, as we have seen, over the last 11 years, the scourge of crime in our streets.

● (1325)

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really did not see a lot of substantive debate on this particular bill, rather than to outline a number of irrelevant facts.

An hon. member: Crime is just an irrelevant fact?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate a little bit of intervention because I am being heckled as I am trying to make a very important point.

It is important that the bill get through the different stages. We are looking forward to the committee stage of this process. We have consulted extensively with different stakeholders, including law enforcement, civil society and academics, as well as industry. We are looking forward to a robust debate at committee. I want to know what kinds of recommendations the member opposite would have for amendments.

Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister would take a minute to reflect on what I said and consider the role he played in bringing forward the failed legislation in Bill C-2 before this House. If it were not for Conservatives, who sharpened their pencils and actually turned the pages, we would be facing laws that infringed on the rights of Canadians, and he would be the author of that.

If the minister wants to talk about substance, why is this bill devoid of substance on areas that are going to be prescribed in regulation instead of being debated in the House, examined and enshrined in law? What is it that needs to be done in the back rooms? Is it the same kind of thing, the same kind of thinking that led to the bill that was Bill C-2, that was such a failure—

• (1330)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON SICKLE CELL DISEASE ACT

Michael Coteau (Scarborough—Woburn, Lib.) moved that Bill S-201, An Act respecting a national framework on sickle cell disease, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in this House to speak on behalf of constituents of Scarborough—Woburn. Today I am also speaking on behalf of the many families and individuals who are impacted by sickle cell disease right across this country, and reflect on some of the pain and challenges that they go through.

I would like to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for seconding the second reading of this bill. I would also like to recognize an advocate, Biba Tinga, who is joining us here today. This legislation comes from the other place, from Senator Mégie and also Senator Ince. They brought this proposed piece of legislation forward to this House. It is an honour for me to be able to speak on behalf of the tens of thousands of community members across this country who support this. I also want to acknowledge the role of parliamentary Black caucus members from the Senate and the House of Commons who have been working on this issue for many years. I would like to thank both senators for their leadership and compassion.

If this bill is passed, it will make a significant, positive difference in the lives of thousands of Canadians across this country. For far too long, sickle cell disease has had a negative impact on too many Canadians. Bill S-201 represents a massive opportunity to improve the lives of Canadians today and in the future. This disease is life-threatening. It often has the ability to reduce someone's life by up to 30 years. There are 6,000 Canadians who are suffering from this disease today. It disproportionately impacts people of African and Caribbean descent. It also impacts people of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent and members of racialized communities.

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Due to its genetic nature, the disease affects every single part of the body. A person with sickle cell disease is highly vulnerable to organ failure and abnormal lung function, as well as loss of vision. Sickle cell disease also causes extreme pain. In many instances, it requires long visits to the hospital. When a person is in a crisis, in an episode, the illness affects patients' daily lives. This severe pain requires very strong painkillers to mitigate the pain. Often those suffering from sickle cell are stigmatized and labelled as drug-seekers. Far too often, their pain is dismissed, and they are subject to unfair treatment, labelling and judgment.

Additionally, people with sickle cell disease do not suffer alone. Their families suffer. When there is an absence of adequate health care providers, the families take on the role as caregivers. Besides the emotional toll of watching their loved ones suffer, all of these factors put a high strain on caregiving family members to be in a constant state of readiness since a crisis can happen at any given moment.

Due to the nature of this disease, many patients and family members suffer from employment instability, and they find themselves carrying the weight on their shoulders alone. Alarming, sickle cell disease does not qualify for the appropriate benefits within our Canadian system, such as the disability tax credit. With many patients or their families navigating unemployment due to the illness, the cost grows quickly, both financially and psychologically.

This is very troubling, especially because people who suffer from sickle cell disease normally come from low-income neighbourhoods. Some 41% of those who suffer from sickle cell disease live in the lowest-income neighbourhoods in the country, amounting to roughly triple the rate of the general population. As such, many with sickle cell disease face barriers ranging from decreased educational opportunities, lack of financial stability due to the risk of work termination, issues with obtaining accommodation, lack of recognition of a disability and exclusion from many government programs.

This ends up causing an ongoing cycle that disproportionately impacts our society's most vulnerable communities. It is crucial that health care professionals be able to recognize the symptoms and respond accordingly. Unfortunately, too many frontline health care professionals lack the professional awareness and knowledge in identifying and treating the disease. Moreover, access to specialized health care remains heavily dependent on geography, with services fragmented right across the country.

• (1335)

These issues extend beyond hospitals because they are rooted in the system and institutional barriers that exist. This is specifically true in the case of blood donation requirements for the long-term treatment of sickle cell. We need more donors to meet blood demands. As the complexity of this illness increases, there is a need for donors of African and Caribbean descent to make those donations, as they are most likely compatible.

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However, Canada permanently bans donations from individuals who have had malaria or who have recently visited countries where there are high cases of malaria, unlike countries like the United States, the United Kingdom and France, which instead impose temporary deferral programs. This disproportionately affects Canadians of African and Caribbean descent, the very communities that need these types of blood donations the most.

Now is the time for members of this House to support a national framework for sickle cell disease in this country. Bill S-201 proposes a comprehensive national framework to improve how Canada understands the diagnosis and treats sickle cell disease. At its core, the bill is about coordination rather than duplication. It is about consistency rather than patchwork. It calls for the federal government to work collaboratively with provinces and territories, health care providers, researchers, experts and community organizations to ensure that patients receive timely, evidence-based and compassionate care, no matter where they live.

In addition, the bill pushes for a national standard of care and universal newborn screening across the country, recognizing that early diagnosis, consistent treatment and equal access to care can significantly improve the outcomes and prevent avoidable complications. Bill S-201 also looks beyond the clinical setting. It recognizes the need for public awareness and anti-stigma campaigns to reduce misinformation, support families and encourage community participation in areas such as blood donation and peer support.

The bill highlights the importance of a more diversified blood supply, especially since many patients benefit from closely matched blood donations from people of African and Caribbean descent. It also addresses the financial realities of living with sickle cell disease by calling for stronger financial supports, better disability recognition and more equitable access to medication, so that treatment is not determined by postal code or one's ability to pay.

Ultimately, the urgency of this bill cannot be overstated. Sickle cell disease is a severe and life-altering condition, yet it has long been marginalized and systematically neglected, despite being one of the most common genetic diseases in the world. Bill S-201 is an important step toward correcting that neglect, and building a more fair, coordinated and humane system for patients and families across our country.

I would like to take a moment to recognize some of the many people who, for the last many decades, have been looking for ways to mitigate the impact of sickle cell disease and build better lives for Canadians.

I would like to thank those who have worked on this topic in this House. There have been tireless advocates like Kirsty Duncan, who unfortunately passed away earlier this year. She was a strong advocate for this issue. Her torch was carried by the Hon. Jane Cordy, who introduced Bill S-211, which called for the designation of June 19 as National Sickle Cell Awareness Day. There is also the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. He was the one who sponsored that bill in this House. The bill was passed and it has been law now for almost a decade.

I want to thank some community members, but before I do that, I want to say that there have been literally hundreds, if not thou-

sands, of people who have added to this effort over the last four decades, in Ontario and across the country. I wanted to take a moment to speak about a few people who have gone above and beyond.

● (1340)

Outside the government, there are folks like Biba Tinga, as I said, who is with us today. She is the president of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada and one of the main drivers of the bill. I want to recognize her work. For more than a decade, she has been advocating for better treatment, more options for patients and families, and stronger public understanding of the disease. Her work is focused not just on the medical component. It is also focused on looking for ways to deal with the everyday realities that people go through, including stigma, employment disruption, mental health pressures and, of course, financial strain.

As members may know, I served as a member of the Ontario legislature for 10 years. While I was there, I met many advocates from the Ontario side who worked for decades to better the lives of Canadians suffering from sickle cell disease. I want to recognize the work of the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario, specifically Lanre Tunji-Ajayi, who has been raising awareness and has been advocating for better screening and care and a better public understanding of sickle cell disease within the community and within government.

I have to take a moment to recognize the extraordinary work of Nurse Dotty Nicholas. She has done incredible work in Ontario. She was awarded the Order of Ontario in 2010, and in 2006 she worked with the Ontario government, with then premier Dalton McGuinty, to put in place screening in Ontario that has been replicated right across the country.

I want to thank TAIBU Community Health Centre and its executive director, Liben, for the extraordinary work they are doing in this area. They are looking for ways to focus on prevention, restoration and advancement. Their work with the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario develops specialized community-based care and improved access to genetic counselling and primary care.

Finally, I want to take a moment to thank one of the pioneers of all this work, the late Lillie Johnson, who advocated for decades for the screening of newborns.

The bill is about fairness. It is about correcting the mistakes of the past. Systemic barriers were put in place, and people suffering from this very common genetic disease were not provided with the right types of tools necessary to advance themselves in a fair way in society when it came to employment, benefits and medication. I have met many people who suffer from sickle cell disease. I have known people growing up in my community who have passed away from the disease. In fact, people very close to me have suffered and passed away from this disease. It is a very devastating disease.

When people go into an episode, they can hardly move their body. The pain is so strong, and they do not know when it is going to hit. As Canadians, when talking about one of the most common rare diseases that exist in the world, we can do a better job, and the leadership is going to start in the House. If we pass the national framework for sickle cell disease, we would have the opportunity to build a better life for thousands of Canadians directly and indirectly through their networks, communities and families, and strengthen the ability for people to build themselves up, do exactly what they want to do, contribute as much as they can to build this beautiful country and make it an even better place.

One of the highlights of my political career has been to introduce and speak to this bill. I want to thank all members of the House for listening today and thank all those who will support it. I appreciate their time.

• (1345)

The Deputy Speaker: This is a good time to remind members, since this is the first hour of debate on a private member's bill, that when the mover of the motion gets up to speak, they have 15 minutes, and then there is five minutes for questions and comments afterward.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for bringing this important bill to the House. I believe that the problem is going to grow even bigger in the next decades. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians may be faced with something like this.

I have a technical question. Canada already has a national strategy for drugs for rare diseases. Bill S-201, which we are discussing today, focuses only on a single rare disease. Does the hon. member believe that this framework would contradict the existing law we have in place?

Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, obviously the member has done his homework, and I appreciate that. This is a disease that has often been neglected. My father tells me that back in Grenada, 40 or 50 years ago, they were using, and this is not a joke, leeches and blood sucking in order to try to figure out what was going on. The disease has had a short history in medicine when it comes to main medicine practices. We are at a stage right now where the scientific revolution that is taking place with so much change provides us with such an opportunity to actually focus on a disease that, even within the rare diseases that exist, traditionally has not been given the opportunity to be studied, researched and invested into. The bill would provide us with an opportunity to do much better and especially align it with the science and technology to improve the lives of so many Canadians, because the medicine is out there.

[Translation]

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois fully understands the urgency of addressing the issue of sickle cell disease. This is a very noble gesture on the part of my colleague. However, as he probably knows, health care falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. A number of the points raised by the bill are already being addressed by Quebec's health care system.

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It is true that there is value in raising awareness. However, does my colleague not agree that there are some unnecessary redundancies in certain parts of the bill that are already being addressed by the Quebec ministry of health?

[English]

Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for recognizing the seriousness of this disease. The fact is that some provinces and territories are doing great things and some are not doing as much as they possibly could. There is a huge opportunity to build a national network that would not only do the research, but collectively collect the data. As they say, if there is no data, there is no problem. We do not even know the statistics across the country. There has to be a national framework to bring all of that together, to build better educational programs and to share best practices.

This is never, ever about taking anything away from the provinces. It is about giving the provinces the ability to share and enhance what they are currently doing.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Scarborough—Woburn for bringing forward this very important piece of legislation. In fact, in the fight against sickle cell disease, a lot of the work starts in Scarborough. There are some incredible heroes who have been doing the work, and there are so many individuals in our communities who are impacted by it.

I am just wondering if the member can reflect on the journey that people in Scarborough have faced, the response that the bill would give them and the confidence that the bill would give them in order to make sure that their lives are improved.

Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, we had a recent town hall in Scarborough at Markham Road and the 401 at Global Kingdom Ministries. We held a community forum there, and we had many people, 100-plus people, come in from the region to talk about this. People told us stories about what they go through in their lives. My friend refers to them as warriors, folks who tell their personal stories. Members can imagine being a young person who has just finished university, 21 years old, at the top of their game, but they do not know when the next episode is going to come. This is about making sure that we put in place the right types of processes to allow people to reach their full potential, and that is good for Canada.

• (1350)

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House, and specifically today to speak to Bill S-201, an act respecting a national framework on sickle cell disease.

To begin, I want to acknowledge the important intent behind the legislation. Sickle cell disease is a serious, lifelong condition that affects approximately 6,000 Canadians and their families across this country. It is a painful, complex and often under-recognized illness. Better coordination and improved awareness within our health system are important.

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For those Canadians affected, this disease has had a profound impact. Families face repeated hospital visits, chronic pain crises and uncertainty around access to consistent treatment and care. These are real challenges, and Canada currently has no coordinated data infrastructure for sickle cell disease. Therefore, we are not able to properly track outcomes, evaluate treatments at scale or ensure that best practices are shared effectively across the country. That gap is part of the reason conversations like this one are so important.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, while the prevalence may be lower than in larger urban centres, we are no strangers to the challenges of rare disease management. Patients in rural, remote and coastal communities often face additional barriers simply because of geography, whether that is access to specialists, access to diagnostic services or access to ongoing treatment support. In fact, after affordability, access to health care is the second-biggest concern that I hear about in my riding of Long Range Mountains. Many Canadians living in rural, remote and coastal areas experience these same challenges, often waiting extended periods of time to see specialists. Therefore, coordination can be very useful.

Bill S-201 proposes the development of a national framework that touches on a wide range of areas, from health care provider training to public awareness, neonatal screening, research networks and even the analysis of potential tax credits and changes to disability and drug coverage programs.

In principle, coordination and information sharing across jurisdictions can be beneficial. We should always be open to improving how provinces and territories learn from one another and how best practices can be shared. Canadians definitely benefit from governments working together.

Conservatives have supported efforts to raise awareness and improve outcomes for Canadians living with this disease. We supported the recognition of June 19 as National Sickle Cell Awareness Day and have consistently supported broader efforts to strengthen frameworks that improve health outcomes for Canadians. We also recognize the importance of advancing a rare disease strategy to support treatment development and of working with provinces to improve labour mobility through nationally recognized credentials for health care professionals. These are practical steps that could help strengthen care across the country, and especially in areas where barriers to access exist.

However, there are considerations that must be addressed with this legislation. We must be very careful about jurisdiction. Health care delivery is, and must remain, the responsibility of the provinces. Any national framework must respect that division of powers. If federal initiatives move too far in setting standards without clear collaboration, we risk creating friction with provincial systems that are already managing significant pressures.

In fact, this bill uses the term “standards” rather than “guidelines”, which differs from comparable federal health framework legislation. The choice of language is important. Clinical practice is determined by medical professionals and provincial systems, and any federal role should be clearly advisory in nature.

We have seen in previous framework legislation, including in areas such as Lyme disease and firefighter cancer frameworks, that the most effective federal role is often one of coordination and guidance rather than prescriptive direction. In this case, the bill would benefit from clearer language around what is intended as guidance and what is intended as a binding expectation to reflect reality.

Second, while this bill would not include a direct appropriation of funds, it points to areas that would carry cost implications. A national research network, expanded neonatal screening programs, public awareness campaigns, enhanced training and potential expansions to drug coverage and disability supports are all meaningful initiatives, but they do come with fiscal implications that have not been fully defined yet, so transparency on those costs is important. At present, there is no fiscal appropriation and no Parliamentary Budget Officer estimate. Before this is finalized, Parliament should have a clear understanding of what the measures would cost and how they would be implemented.

● (1355)

Third, there is a question of duplication. Canada already has a national strategy for drugs for rare diseases. We need to ensure that this framework complements that strategy rather than overlaps with it, so that there is no confusion over how support is delivered. When dealing with rare diseases, efficiency, coordination and clarity in policy design are essential. Families affected by sickle cell disease need streamlined support, not overlapping systems.

That said, I want to recognize that the objectives in this bill align with important policy goals we have supported in the past. For example, improving caregiver recognition and support is something Conservatives have long advocated for, including making caregiver benefits more accessible and more responsive to real-world needs. Likewise, streamlining access to disability supports and improving drug approval and treatment pathways for rare diseases are areas where there is room for constructive work.

We also recognize the importance of early diagnosis and awareness. Long wait times and limited access to health care professionals can create a higher risk for these Canadians. Therefore, neonatal screening, when done appropriately and in partnership with provinces and territories, we recognize, can make a meaningful difference in outcomes for patients with a rare disease like sickle cell, but again, the keyword is partnership.

The framework must be developed in collaboration with provinces and territories. Conservatives believe the federal government should work with provinces on national health objectives. It must be developed collaboratively with provinces and territories, with clinicians, with patient advocacy groups and with those who are directly affected by the disease. Without that collaboration, the most well-intentioned framework can fall short in implementation.

We also need clarity on accountability. The bill would distribute responsibilities across multiple departments. While coordination is important, Canadians also expect clear lines of responsibility so progress can be measured and reported in a meaningful way.

The appropriate next step is to send this bill to committee. In committee, there is an opportunity to strengthen the legislation, improve its language, ensure it respects provincial jurisdiction and address the fiscal unknowns that remain. It is also the place to hear from stakeholders, medical professionals and provincial partners to ensure that the framework is both practical and effective. We believe amendments should be considered to ensure that provincial collaboration is explicit; that terminology, such as “standards”, is clearly defined in line with advisory clinical practice; and that cost implications are fully examined before implementation proceeds.

These are not objections to the intent of the bill but recommendations to ensure that if the framework moves forward, it does so in a way that is responsible, collaborative, grounded in the realities of the health care system and the regions of the country, practical and respectful of jurisdiction.

Canadians living with this disease and their families would definitely benefit from better coordination, better awareness and better outcomes. The question is not whether we should act, but how we act, and how we do it in a sustainable and co-operative way. For that reason, we support sending the bill to committee, where it can be strengthened and improved to ensure that it delivers real results for Canadians while respecting the roles of provinces and the importance of fiscal transparency.

[*Translation*]

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill S-201, an act respecting a national framework on sickle cell disease. This legislation establishes a national framework to support Canadians with sickle cell disease—also known as sickle cell anemia or drepanocytosis—their families and their caregivers. The initiative's primary aim is to raise awareness about this rare chronic disease, which predominantly affects individuals of African or Caribbean descent.

The Bloc Québécois acknowledges that sickle cell disease is a serious problem and that people living with it must be supported. However, some aspects of the strategy encroach on the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. For example, Quebec has repeatedly let it be known that it wishes to retain control of public health awareness campaigns in its territory, yet the bill calls for federal awareness campaigns.

Furthermore, Quebec has already developed guidelines on this disease for its health professionals. These guidelines have been incorporated into sickle cell disease screening efforts as part of Quebec's neonatal blood testing program. Since Quebec and the

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provinces have authority over their health systems, it is inappropriate for the federal government to impose guidelines that affect their hospitals, for which it has no constitutional responsibility. We are dismayed that the bill fails to acknowledge Quebec's specific characteristics in the health field.

We would like to see the bill amended so that it reflects the constitutional reality and the division of powers. Constitutional concerns aside, we recognize that the bill's framework has the merit of drawing attention to a little-known disease. Looking more closely at the bill, we see a proposal for a nine-point national framework that would be developed by the Minister of Health in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments and all relevant stakeholders, such as caregivers, support persons, service providers, representatives of the medical and research communities and organizations. If we look more closely at these nine points, we see that there is a provision that includes measures to address the training, education and diagnostic and treatment tool needs of health care professionals relating to sickle cell disease. I must point out that this is not the federal government's role. Quebec's department of health and social services is already doing it.

Quebec already has various guidelines for health care professionals. For example, there is the neonatal blood screening guide, intended for perinatal nurses and midwives. There is also the Quebec neonatal blood screening program, which involves screening newborns' blood for diseases. These are just a few examples of what Quebec is already doing to respond to this disease. The Centre hospitalier universitaire de Québec-Université Laval even publishes a newsletter for health care professionals on the Quebec neonatal blood screening program.

The bill also provides for the establishment of evidence-based national standards for the diagnosis and treatment of sickle cell disease. Again, I must point out that Quebec already has programs, standards and practice guidelines in place.

Next, the bill includes measures to institute universal neonatal screening, postnatal diagnosis when necessary and the provision of results for affected individuals and organizations. Quebec's newborn screening program already screens for various diseases, including sickle cell disease. The program is available to all newborns in Quebec and, as of April 28, all newborns are automatically registered in the program. Screening is now done using a single blood sample taken 24 to 48 hours after birth. This change aims to detect diseases targeted by neonatal screening more quickly and accurately. Here again, we see that this measure in the bill is already in effect in Quebec.

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The bill also provides for measures to support public awareness campaigns on sickle cell disease and blood donation. As everyone is probably aware and as I mentioned earlier, Quebec has repeatedly stated that it wants to retain control over public health policies and any associated public awareness efforts within its jurisdiction.

● (1400)

Quebec already publishes an online public information page on sickle cell anemia and its variants. It summarizes the symptoms, the treatments, the medical follow-up, available support groups and the tests that can be done on people interested in finding out whether they carry the problem gene.

In addition, Quebec already offers sickle cell disease awareness and information tools, including a family handbook that provides parents with a wealth of helpful information about the disease, such as available services, facts about the disease and its complications, information about prevention, medication and treatment, and a list of available resources and websites. The nine-point list in the bill also includes measures to promote and support blood donation by every segment of the population and the creation of a diverse blood supply that allows for safe transfusions.

I want to note that Héma-Québec is responsible for blood donations in Quebec, while Canadian Blood Services is responsible for that in the rest of Canada. Concerns have been raised about Black women being able to donate blood because their hemoglobin count is naturally lower than Héma-Québec's eligibility criterion. Héma-Québec conducted a study to determine whether taking iron supplements following a blood donation could help replace the iron lost and expand eligibility, which would help optimize the collective blood supply. We view this as more of a scientific issue than a political one. In this matter, we should trust the various experts.

Another aspect of the bill calls for an analysis of the introduction of a tax credit for people with sickle cell disease and their caregivers. Both Quebec and Canada offer tax credits for caregivers. The Bloc Québécois supports this proposal. If the federal government wishes to review the criteria in its tax credit to ensure that caregivers of people with a disabling form of sickle cell disease can benefit from a tax credit, we see no reason to oppose that.

The bill also provides for the inclusion of sickle cell disease in the eligibility criteria for existing disability benefits. Certain forms of the disease can be associated with severe limitations, so it is entirely appropriate for the federal government to review its programs to ensure that those who should be eligible actually are. Canada offers the disability tax credit as well as the Canada disability benefit. To qualify for the second benefit, a person must first qualify for the first one. To be eligible for the tax credit, a person must have a severe and prolonged impairment. This means that the person is unable to perform essential functions such as walking, dressing or feeding themselves, or that they can do so but it takes them three times as long as a person without the impairment. Furthermore, this limitation must be present all or substantially all of the time—at least 90% of the time—and be prolonged, meaning it must last more than a year.

The bill would also require an analysis of the potential inclusion of treatments essential to sickle cell disease care in public drug insurance plans. Once again, there is a bit of an issue in terms of the

jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. Public drug insurance plans are a provincial matter. As a result, the federal government cannot impose conditions on provincial public insurance plans requiring them to include or not include certain services or drugs. However, as an employer with over 350,000 employees, it could overhaul its own private drug insurance plan so that its employees get this coverage. It would be smarter and more realistic for the bill to focus on what the federal government can do rather than promise impossible changes.

We support doing the right thing, and we understand the awareness aspect of the bill, but it is important to keep in mind that Quebec is already doing a lot of the things proposed in the bill and that this encroaches on Quebec's jurisdiction over health matters.

● (1405)

[English]

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to express our government's support for Bill S-201, which seeks to establish a national framework to support Canadians with sickle cell disease. I want to express my sincere thanks to Senator Ince and Senator Mégie for their hard work in the Senate and for their advocacy. I want to also thank my dear friend, the hon. member for Scarborough—Woburn, for all his work in the House of Commons and his years of advocacy on this issue.

This is an important bill. It passed the Senate with unanimous support, and I hope we will do the same here in the House. Bill S-201 asks us to consider how a national framework could improve consistency, coordination and outcomes for Canadians living with sickle cell disease. The bill invites us to consider not only the individuals directly affected but also the families, caregivers and communities that share the burden of managing this complex condition.

I think it is important to talk about what sickle cell disease is, because it is not well-known, as the member mentioned. As with any rare disease, raising awareness is a key step in building broader understanding.

Sickle cell disease is a group of inherited blood disorders where red blood cells form an abnormal sickle shape. This can lead to reduced life expectancy and acute episodes of severe pain, commonly referred to as sickle cell crises. Current treatments include blood transfusions and medications aimed at reducing the frequency of pain crises. Stem cell transplants offer a potential cure but are limited by donor availability and significant medical risk. Emerging gene therapies show promise but come with extremely high costs.

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Approximately 6,000 Canadians live with this condition, and there is a disproportionate impact on people of African, Caribbean, Middle Eastern and South Asian ancestry. Black Canadians in particular bear the brunt of sickle cell disease. Approximately one in 10 Black Canadians carry the sickle cell gene mutation, yet because the disease is so poorly known and understood, Black patients frequently report discrimination in care, which leads to delayed diagnosis, increased reliance on emergency services and poor health outcomes. Limited clinical expertise, inconsistent guidelines and under-representation of Black health professionals further compound these challenges.

There has been some progress toward national training standards. Canadian Blood Services formally endorsed the sickle cell disease education program for health care professionals, a program developed by the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario. This represents a credible evidence-based framework already available to jurisdictions across the country. Established standards such as these could ensure greater consistency in care and strengthen our collective capacity to support Canadians living with sickle cell disease.

We also know that research can play an enormous role in furthering our understanding of this disease. That is why it is so exciting to hear that the Canadian Institutes of Health Research has supported significant research efforts in this field, including an investment of \$13.8 million in new sickle cell-related research over the past decade. This represents a strong foundation on which to build that will create opportunities for Canadian researchers to continue advancing knowledge, improve diagnosis and treatment, and ultimately enhance the quality of life for individuals and the families affected by sickle cell disease.

Standardized care pathways are also important. We have started to see progress on this front as well. For example, the Canadian Hemoglobinopathy Association developed and published comprehensive clinical guidelines that outline best practices for both diagnosis and treatment.

I am pleased to report that Ontario has already integrated these guidelines into the Ontario health quality standard related to sickle cell disease. Hopefully more provinces and territories will follow its lead. Similarly, several provinces and territories have already established standards related to newborn screening notification, diagnostic processes and ongoing care for individuals living with sickle cell disease that integrate these national standards. These efforts demonstrate the important progress that is being made at the regional level.

The federal government has a role to play here as well, and we have been. Thanks to funding under the national strategy for drugs for rare diseases, Canada's Drug Agency is supporting greater consistency in newborn screening across the country, including a recommended pan-Canadian list of conditions to screen for newborns that is inclusive of sickle cell disease. Thanks to this approach at a national level, 11 provinces and territories now screen newborns for sickle cell disease, and this condition is under review or development in the remaining jurisdictions.

● (1410)

In fighting against sickle cell disease, however, nothing is more important than education, and Bill S-201 recognizes this. We need

to raise public awareness of sickle cell disease, especially the critical importance of blood donation.

In 2017, the House unanimously adopted Bill S-211, which created National Sickle Cell Awareness Day on June 19. Thanks to this bill, which was sponsored by my colleague, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, there is a national spotlight on the experiences of individuals and families affected by sickle cell disease.

We also have Sickle Cell Awareness Month every September, during which Canadian Blood Services, the provinces and territories collaborate, increasing the understanding of the disease and encouraging blood donation, with a particular focus on engaging donors from African, Caribbean and Black communities. These efforts are critical because donation rates among under-represented communities remain low. Less than 1% of Canada's blood donor base is from Black individuals, despite the disproportionate impact of sickle cell disease among this population. By increasing awareness of the disease and of what we can do to treat it, we can work to meet the transfusion needs of many patients living with sickle cell disease.

Bill S-201 presents a framework that aims to address many of the challenges faced by Canadians living with sickle cell disease. The principles associated with each of the bill's nine elements underscore both the importance of the issue and the complexity of the solutions. I look forward to continuing the discussion and to hearing the perspective of all members of this House. I hope all of us will join together to pass this important bill.

● (1415)

Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to discuss Bill S-201, a national framework on sickle cell disease act. This is a disease that many have heard of, but few are aware of the details.

Sickle cell disease, also known as sickle cell anemia or drepanocytosis, is a group of red blood cell disorders. Those with the disease have abnormal hemoglobin. As members probably know, hemoglobin is the part of the red blood cells that carries vital oxygen throughout the human body. We know how important it is that tissues in the body receive a steady and life-sustaining supply of oxygen to work well. Hemoglobin takes the oxygen from the lungs to the parts of the body that need it. Normal cells are a disc shape, sort of like a doughnut. This shape allows the cells to be flexible. This flexibility and shape allow the cells to travel easily through blood vessels throughout the body.

Today, an estimated 6,000 Canadians have sickle cell disease. They are among the millions of sufferers worldwide. There are 300,000 babies born annually with sickle cell disease, and that number is expected to be 400,000 by 2050. Five per cent of the world's population carries the gene.

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In 2006 and in 2010, the World Health Organization adopted two resolutions calling on countries to strengthen their responses to the disease. Canada made a start with the creation of the National Sickle Cell Awareness Day, on June 19. Now it is time to take it a step further.

This bill calls on the Minister of Health to develop a national framework on sickle cell disease.

First, it would include measures to address the training, education, and diagnostic and treatment tool needs of health care professionals relating to sickle cell disease.

Second, it would provide for the creation of a national research network to advance research, improve data collection and establish a national registry on sickle cell disease.

Third, it would set evidence-based national standards for the diagnosis and treatment of sickle cell disease.

Fourth, it would include measures to institute universal neonatal screening and postnatal diagnosis when necessary and the provision of results for affected individuals and organizations.

Fifth, it would include measures to support public awareness campaigns on sickle cell disease and blood donation.

Sixth, it would provide measures to promote and support blood donation by every segment of the population and the creation of a diverse blood supply that allows for safe transfusions.

Seventh, it would include an analysis respecting the implementation of a tax credit for individuals with sickle cell disease and their caregivers.

Eighth, it would ensure the inclusion of sickle cell disease in the eligibility criteria for existing disability benefits.

Finally, it would contain an analysis of the potential inclusion of treatments essential to sickle cell disease care in the public drug insurance plan.

I think it is fair to say that the ambitions are big and that this is a very ambitious project.

This inherited blood disorder affects a person's hemoglobin. It causes chronic pain, organ damage, serious infections and a shortened life expectancy. Early detection is important for successful treatment.

Sickle hemoglobin forms stiff rods within the red cell, which changes the cell's shape to something more like a crescent or sickle shape. This creates enormous problems. The sickle-shaped cells result in blockages because the cells are stiff and unable to pass through the vessels easily. These resulting blockages mean that the vital oxygen stops reaching the parts of the body that need it.

What impact does this have on the person with the disease? A lack of oxygen results in attacks of sudden and severe pain throughout the body. It is a horrible condition. This pain occurs without warning and often results in hospitalization. The pain usually lasts five to seven days. While not always the cause, it has been noted that pain crisis can be triggered by temperature changes, stress, dehydration and even living at high altitudes. Of course, any infection

that normally causes a rise in the number of red blood cells triggers the disease as well.

• (1420)

For most children with the disease, pain usually subsides between pain episodes. Nonetheless, many children with sickle cell anemia take penicillin every day to help the immune system, and they face a lifetime regimen of daily folic acid. For teens and adults, the pain is usually chronic, which can have a huge impact on the education, employment and mental health of sufferers.

Due to the lack of oxygen to vital organs on a regular basis, sickle cell disease often begins to cause long-term damage to vital organs. It is common for those with the disease to develop serious issues with their skin, brain, bones, spleen, heart, kidneys, liver, lungs and even their eyes. The spleen is particularly susceptible, because of its narrow blood vessels and its basic job of clearing old red blood cells.

If we can, through legislation, help alleviate suffering, then we should do so. There are some questions that will need to be dealt with as this bill moves forward. For example, the bill does not define the scope of universal neonatal screening, plus instituting and administering it would require provincial buy-in. A national framework that sets evidence-based national standards for diagnosis and treatment may create friction with provinces unless implemented collaboratively.

I should point out that comparable health-related framework bills, such as the Federal Framework on Lyme Disease Act, call for the creation of guidelines or best practices instead of standards. Clinical standards are evidence-based recommendations produced by medical professional bodies that describe optimal care for specific conditions. They are advisory only and binding on no one. It is also unclear in the legislation who would establish these guidelines.

I should also point out that Canada already has a national strategy for drugs for rare diseases bill. Bill S-201 focuses on one rare disease, so this framework may duplicate or contradict the existing bill. However, almost every piece of legislation we consider has flaws when it is first brought to the House. This is why we discuss it here in the chamber and in even greater detail at the committee stage. Hopefully we can make improvements. The goal is to serve the people of Canada and in this case, those who are suffering from sickle cell disease. I look forward to working together to improve Bill S-201, and the day when sickle cell disease is something consigned to history.

Kathy Borrelli (Windsor—Tecumseh—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today parliamentarians are considering a measure to address a rare disease that affects thousands of Canadians, sickle cell disease. Bill S-201, the national framework on sickle cell disease act, is intended to take steps to ensure awareness and to ensure that the level of care for people with sickle cell disease across Canada is more aligned.

Sickle cell disease is a lifetime genetic blood condition where red blood cells become hard and crescent-shaped instead of round. These misshapen cells can block blood flow, causing severe pain, infections and serious damage to organs over time. An estimated 6,500 people in Canada suffer from sickle cell disease. I say “estimated”, as we do not have an accurate count because there is not a national registry. Because of this, it is difficult to fully understand the scope of the condition, or for provinces to plan effectively for health care services and resource allocations so patients receive appropriate support across the country.

Conservatives are proud to support sickle cell awareness. We voted to recognize June 19 as national sickle cell awareness day, as an important step in increasing visibility and understanding of this disease across the country. The bill would build on this awareness by including “measures to support public awareness campaigns on sickle cell disease and blood donation”.

Despite the good intention of the legislation, there are several sections of the bill that raise questions. The bill seeks to “set evidence-based national standards for the diagnosis and treatment of sickle cell disease”. However, standards of care are set by professional associations that operate under provincial jurisdiction. This is why it is essential that provinces and territories be fully engaged and that their perspectives shape any coordinated national approach.

There are examples of other framework bills where guidance has been established for the care of people with a specific disease or class of diseases. For example, Bill C-442, an act respecting a federal framework on Lyme disease, which was introduced in 2013 in the 41st Parliament, included a provision that mandated the establishment of guidelines regarding the prevention, identification, treatment and management of Lyme disease and the sharing of best practices throughout Canada.

Similarly, Bill C-224, the national framework on cancers linked to firefighting act, introduced in 2022 in the 44th Parliament, will “make recommendations respecting regular screenings for cancers

Private Members' Business

linked to firefighting”, “promote information and knowledge sharing in relation to the prevention and treatment of cancers linked to firefighting” and “prepare a summary of existing standards that recognize cancers linked to firefighting as occupational diseases.”

These are sound and balanced examples of legislation that promote more consistent care across Canada while respecting provincial jurisdiction and encouraging national knowledge sharing. Similar concerns come to mind as the framework seeks to “include measures to institute universal neonatal screening”. As of August 2024, universal sickle cell disease screening has been implemented in all provinces except for Newfoundland and Labrador and the territories.

From my point of view, the real opportunity here would be to focus on closing the remaining gaps, working with jurisdictions that have not yet implemented screening, and supporting them in a way that respects their unique circumstances. I am looking forward to discussions at committee about what collaboration can take place with Newfoundland and Labrador and the territories to make sure the screening can be implemented across all Canadian jurisdictions.

There is also the question of how much taxpayer money the measures included in the bill would cost. To date there has been no estimate from the Parliamentary Budget Officer outlining the financial impact of the bill. It is only reasonable that Canadians have a clear understanding of these price tags before the framework is finalized.

• (1425)

Federal strategies need to focus on delivering value for taxpayers by investing in solutions that improve outcomes, not just increase spending. If we are spending without any results, that is problematic. That is why Conservatives support the implementation of a rare disease strategy, not just a rare disease drug strategy.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

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

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

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

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