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House of Commons Debates

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(Hansard)

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Tuesday, June 16, 2026

Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 16, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 40(1) of the Access to Information Act, the Information Commissioner's report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2026.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

[*English*]

FIRST NATIONS CLEAN WATER ACT

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-37, An Act respecting water, source water, drinking water, wastewater and related infrastructure on First Nation lands.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, entitled “Confronting Antifeminist Ideologies in Canada”.

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

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 31st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, entitled “Challenges Regarding Special Ballot Voting”.

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

[*English*]

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a supplementary report on behalf of the Conservative members of the committee.

The Conservatives would have liked to see additional recommendations with a view toward strengthening the integrity of our elections, including an amendment to the Canada Elections Act to require electors residing abroad to provide proof of their last place of residence prior to the issuance of a ballot. Currently, there is no requirement of proof of residence. Additionally, the Conservatives oppose the recommendation for earlier candidate nomination deadlines, which was not supported by evidence. We also caution against the use of hybrid ballot delivery systems, including using Canadian diplomatic missions as polling stations, out of concern for ballot integrity and ballot secrecy.

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, entitled “The Effects of Influencers and Social Media Content on Children and Adolescents”.

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

While I have the floor, I move:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

[*English*]

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

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded vote, please.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1045)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 162*)

YEAS

Members

Acan	Al Soud
Ali	Alty
Anand	Auguste
Bains	Baker
Bardeesy	Battiste
Beech	Begum
Belanger (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River)	Bendayan
Bittle	Brière
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Champagne
Chang	Chartrand
Chatel	Chen
Chenette	Chi
Church	Clark
Connors	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dandurand	Danko
d'Entremont	Deschênes-Thériault
Desrochers	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Earle
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Eyolfson
Fancy	Fanjoy
Fergus	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Fry	Gainey
Gasparro	Gerretsen
Gladu	Gould
Grant	Greaves
Guay	Guilbeault
Gull-Masty	Hajdu
Hanley	Harrison
Hepfner	Hirtle
Hodgson	Hogan
Housefather	Hussen
Iacono	Idlout
Jaczek	Jeneroux
Joseph	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Klassen	Koutrakis
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)	Lapointe (Sudbury)
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lavack	Lavoie
Leitão	Lightbound
Long	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Ma	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacDonald (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Malette (Bay of Quinte)	Maloney
Martin	McKelvie
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McKnight
McLean (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke)	Ménard
Mendès	Michel
Miedema	Miller
Mingarelli	Morrissey
Myles	Naqvi

Nathan	Nguyen
Noormohamed	Ntumba
Oliphant	Olszewski
O'Rourke	Osborne
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Provost	Ramsay
Rana	Robertson
Rochefort	Romanado
Royer	Sahota
Saini	Sari
Sari	Sawatzky
Schiefke	Sgro
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sodhi
Solomon	Sousa
St-Pierre	Sudds
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Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Anderson	Anstey
Arnold	Au
Baber	Bailey
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt)
Berthold	Bexte
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bonin	Bonk
Borrelli	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cobena
Cody	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Niagara South)	Dawson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
DeRidder	Deschênes
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Duncan
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)
Falk (Provencher)	Fortin
Garon	Gaudreau
Gazan	Genuis
Gill (Calgary Skyview)	Gill (Brampton West)
Gill (Calgary McKnight)	Gill (Windsor West)
Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)	Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)
Goodridge	Gourde
Groleau	Guglielmin
Gunn	Hallan
Hardy	Ho
Hoback	Holman
Jackson	Jansen
Jivani	Johns
Khanna	Kibble
Kirkland	Kmiec
Konanz	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kronis
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lantsman

Routine Proceedings

Larouche	Lawrence
Lawton	Lefebvre
Lemire	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd	Mahal
Majumdar	Malette (Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)
Mantle	Martel
May	Mazier
McCauley	McLean (Calgary Centre)
McPherson	Melillo
Menegakis	Moore
Morin	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Perron	Poilievre
Redekopp	Rempel Garner
Reynolds	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ross	Rowe
Ruff	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Simard
Small	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stevenson
Strahl	Strauss
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Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Uppal
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Members

Anandasangaree	Bezan
Blois	Fuhr
Gaheer	Gallant
Godin	Joly
Kelly	Kuruc
Lalonde	LeBlanc
McGuinty	McKenzie
Plamondon	Shipley— 16

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Corey Tochor: Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask for unanimous consent to introduce my private member's bill.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

● (1050)

CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-286, An act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and the Food and Drugs Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today, I am honoured to introduce Thomas's bill. Thomas was a constituent of mine. He was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer and given months to live. His anxiety was all over the place. His doctor prescribed psilocybin with counselling, and it worked. It calmed his anxiety so that his mind was

put at ease and his body could fight the cancer. He accessed it through the special access programs we have in Health Canada. It was working, for three years, until they cut him off.

My private member's bill would allow physicians to prescribe psilocybin counselling to their patients and not have the bureaucrats in Health Canada override them, which is the case currently.

I am excited to introduce this bill. I look forward to it going to committee and hopefully passing this, because we face an epidemic of mental health and addiction issues. We have crises in our streets, and there is a solution that could include psilocybin counselling.

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

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Saskatoon—University for presenting his private member's bill. I will certainly support it.

I wonder if there is unanimous consent so that I could present a private member's bill at this moment.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, given that there has been some inconsistency, I would like to request unanimous consent to be able to present my private member's bill, which has been waiting for weeks on the Order Paper.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk.

Gaétan Malette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to return to petitions under Routine Proceedings.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Burlington.

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, as the chair of the finance committee, it is my honour to inform the House that after 25 hours of clause-by-clause consideration, I have deposited with the clerks the report for the House's consideration.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order, but it is noted.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***COMBATTING HATE ACT**

The House resumed from June 15 consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places), and of the amendment.

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the big-hearted constituents in the caring riding of Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke to speak to Bill C-9, the Liberal bill to ban symbols of hate.

The bill is back here because the other place has amended the legislation to include a new symbol to the Liberal hit list. The Senate used to be called the chamber of sober second thought. Unfortunately, under the democratic reforms by Justin Trudeau, that chamber has come to resemble a critical studies faculty lounge. It is less sober second thought and more quick hot takes. While the Senate had sufficient sobriety to reject one amendment on so-called denialism, the decision to include the symbol of a noose highlights a broader problem with the Liberal approach to combatting hate.

As I said during the debate at second reading, the rise in hate is real under the Liberals. The measures in this bill to protect places of worship and cultural centres and add penalties for obstructing or intimidating people from entering those places are a step forward. The removal of the safeguards around religious expression is vile. The criminalization of specific symbols would be less alarming if the Liberals were not the ones pursuing it. They have a long track record of engaging in bad-faith attacks and outright fabrications when they see a chance to smear their political opponents.

I would encourage the Canadians watching this debate at home to listen to the powerful speeches given by the member for Terrebonne and the member for Hull—Aylmer. Both spoke of the legacy of lynching in the United States and how the noose became a symbol of terror and violence. They both cited specific, well-documented historical facts about the history of the noose in the American context, yet when it came time to speak about Canada, the specificity stopped and they moved to speak in generalities.

I am in no way suggesting the members were engaged in a repeat of the outlandish claims made by the Liberal member for Vancouver Centre when she claimed crosses were burning on the lawns of Prince George residents. There have been at least three documented cases of nooses being left at workplaces since the summer of 2020 and the death of George Floyd. Prior to the summer of 2020, there had been only one documented case. All four incidents generated considerable media attention and widespread condemnation. In one of the three cases, a person was arrested and charged.

Hanging a noose on someone's workplace locker is unambiguously a death threat, regardless of ethnicity. If the intent was to foment hate, then the act is already a criminal offence. If this bill becomes law, the police and the Crown prosecutors will still need to prove that the display was intended to promote hate to lay a charge under this act, yet to hear the Liberals speak, one could easily be misinformed into believing that the simple act of displaying a noose

is now a hate crime. Given the Liberals' own recent history of bad-faith claims of noose sightings, this should concern Canadians.

During Justin Trudeau's 2021 superspreader election campaign, the Liberal war room found a pliable journalist to publish the Liberals' pathetic lie that I had depicted the prime minister being lynched. University professors wrote op-eds condemning the so-called depiction of political violence, except it was a fake noose news story. There was no noose. It was a picture of Trudeau pulling on a thin red lanyard while mugging for the camera. Having had the recent experience of the Liberal Party of Canada lying about a noose and then having it reported by the Liberal-funded media, I can speak from my own experience about how troubling it is for the Trudeau Senate to add something as vague as the word "noose" to the list of prohibited terror symbols.

This example of the Liberals seeking to ban the symbol of the noose so soon after engaging in a bad-faith attack on a political opponent by claiming a lanyard was actually a noose does not stand in isolation. During the "freedom convoy" and the protests, we saw the Liberals deploy this exact same technique. Some protesters had likened the public health restrictions to Nazi-era policies. Some had even desecrated the Canadian flag with the Nazi hooked cross as a way of illustrating their point that the Liberals were acting like Nazis. When one of those protesters walked behind a Conservative MP doing an interview with the CBC, the Liberals pounced. They accused us of supporting Nazis. Trudeau literally accused a Jewish MP of standing with people who wave swastikas. The Liberals were more than happy to deploy misinformation and disinformation around the use of a hate symbol to score cheap political points. The CBC worked hand in glove with the government to push this fake narrative.

• (1055)

No one needs to agree with protesters' views comparing the Liberals to the Nazis, but if we want to keep our democracy, we have to protect the right to express those views. Instead, the Liberal-funded media, in close coordination with the Liberal government, sought to discredit the protesters as hate-mongers before a single truck had arrived in the city. Before my Liberal colleagues reach for their favourite talking point, I just want to remind them that the Liberal staffer emails to the media are all available online on the evidence page of the Public Order Emergency Commission website.

Government Orders

These two recent examples, the fake noose and the protesters who were labelled as Nazis for calling the Liberals authoritarian, are precisely why we cannot trust the government with this much power over expression. Even last night during debate, the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas engaged in a bad-faith attack on my colleague for highlighting the different history between Canada and the U.S. That member provides an example of a type of affliction common to Liberals, what we might call the progressive man's burden. They see it as their moral duty to defend those they view as weak while educating the uncivilized among us.

If this bill was a one-off viewed in isolation, a reasonable case could be made to support it. However, when placed in the broader context of decades of Liberal political strategy that sought to paint all Conservative opposition as motivated by hate and the Liberals' continued desire to construct an entirely new bureaucracy to monitor Canadians' digital expression, this bill looks like a dangerous expansion of authority. Layer that atop the Liberals' decision to support the separatist motion to eliminate the religious defence, and the expansion of state powers starts to look threatening to many Canadians.

I agree with my Liberal colleagues when they say hate has grown under the Liberal government. Before the Liberals were elected, there had not been a documented case of a noose in a workplace in decades. Now the Liberals claim it is so common the symbol must be banned. Between 2021 and 2023, there were 238 recorded arson attacks on churches. There are regular hate marches through Jewish neighbourhoods. Liberals even claim their own communities are hotbeds of hatred, where white supremacist rallies are held on a regular basis.

Ever since the Conservative prime minister John Diefenbaker introduced the Canadian Bill of Rights and restored voting rights to indigenous Canadians, which the Liberals had removed, this country had been on a steady march toward greater inclusion. That all changed in 2015. The decision by the Liberal government to abandon Canada's multicultural approach in favour of an imported American ideology of racial essentialism is at the root of the problem. When combined with out-of-control immigration and soft-on-bail policies, we see the inevitable result. We see the Iranian Revolutionary Guard agents hiring contract killers to shoot up synagogues. We see hate marches in our streets. We see places of worship burned to the ground.

Stubbornly, the Liberals still refuse to admit their mistakes on this file. They have admitted they were wrong about carbon taxes. They have admitted they were wrong about the need for tougher bail. They have admitted they were wrong about the need for adult supervision of our immigration system. What will it take for them to realize their approach to combatting hate has only created more hate?

The positive elements in this bill that would protect people attending religious places are completely undone by the decision to remove the religious speech defence. We have recent examples of Liberals spreading disinformation about fake nooses and Nazi supporters. They have cut off debate on this censorship bill. Now they want to create a new bureaucracy to monitor harmful content, yet they tell Canadians to trust the cabinet to determine what is and is not harmful. If Canadians did not even trust the Liberals with a ma-

ajority, we definitely do not trust them with the power to decide what is and is not hate.

• (1100)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the way the Conservative Party of Canada is marginalizing something that has touched the lives of thousands over the years, in regard to the whole noose debate, is somewhat sad.

Let me give a specific example that the member might not be aware of but is the reality of the situation. Senator Bernard, out for a walk, was confronted in her home community by a group, particularly an individual, that was using the physical noose. Now, she is of Black heritage and someone who is very proud to be a Canadian.

I wonder what the member thinks about that sort of an incident. Does she believe that the noose is in fact used as a tool, at times, of extreme racist actions like what Senator Bernard had to physically go through? I would suggest the senator is not alone.

Cheryl Gallant: Yes, Madam Speaker, under the Liberals, and this hatred that they are promoting, I can believe that this incident happened, and it is unacceptable. However, given how the Liberals expand laws and try to encompass innocent people into law-breaking, they cannot be trusted with adding these symbols to the bill.

• (1105)

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the bill would basically strip away the right of a person to quote from their holy text. It would open the door to criminalizing people for uttering words that they are reading from their holy text. I wonder if the member can share with us why the Liberal government did not consult with faith communities across the country to see what the impact would be of taking away these statutory rules that have been in place for so long now, that protect people and allow people to have freedom of speech and freedom of faith. There is a difference between state and faith. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I can say that since the bill has been introduced, I have received more mail with reference to the bill and that particular amendment and the removal of religious freedom than for any other bill.

Government Orders

In fact, it almost comes to the level of the firearms registry back in the late 1990s, Bill C-68. There was such upheaval that it changed the course of the election in my riding, where lawful firearms owners felt that the legislation the Liberals were bringing in was unjust. They feel the same way about this.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Madam Speaker, in the drafting of Bill C-9, some interpretive clauses were added that, in my opinion, address the concerns of my Conservative colleagues. I am going to read them, and I want my Conservative colleagues to tell me what is missing from these clauses so I can reassure them. The goal is not to prevent individuals from worshipping in accordance with the religions they wish to follow.

There are two interpretive clauses that say pretty much the same thing. Here is the first one:

11.1(1) For greater certainty, nothing in subsection 319(2) or (2.2) of the Criminal Code shall be construed as prohibiting a person from communicating a statement on a matter of public interest, including an educational, religious, political or scientific statement made in the course of a discussion, publication or debate, if they do not wilfully promote hatred against an identifiable group by communicating the statement.

That includes people who make religious statements.

The second clarification uses more or less the same wording, but states the following at the end:

...if they do not wilfully promote antisemitism by condoning, denying or down-playing the Holocaust.

Why are my Conservative colleagues not reassured by these interpretive clauses?

[*English*]

Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, what is missing in the government is integrity. The Liberals have no integrity. We have seen in the past how they have misaligned—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Defence is rising on the point of order.

Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, under Standing Order 18, all members of this House are honourable. I would ask the member opposite to retract that statement, saying that the members on this side of the House have no integrity.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): It is a standing order.

The hon. member for Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, on the point of order.

Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I apologize. It is the public who feel that the Liberals do not have enough integrity to be trusted with this bill.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and to speak to the bill. I would like to start by providing a comment on both the question I posed to the member who just spoke and some of the discussion that was taking place late last night around midnight on the floor of the House. I will quote specifically Senator Bernard from

comments she has made, because there has been a lot of talk on the floor about the issue of the noose. This is what she stated:

Honourable senators, I rise to speak to Bill C-9, the combatting hate act. I will start by asking you to join me for a walk. You have just had dinner with your family. After dinner, you go for a walk alone in your neighbourhood. You are walking down the street at dusk, and a group of young men pass you in a pickup truck. They yell profanities at you and tell you to go back to Africa where you belong. You look at the vehicle as it drives away, and there is a noose hanging from the back of their pickup truck.

This, in part, is why we need to bring in the legislation that is before us today. I find it disrespectful when individuals in essence mock or try to belittle something as serious as the noose, because we do know that racism hurts. It hurts a great deal at times, physically and mentally.

For many years, from the beginning of my political career in 1988, I have had the opportunity to talk about a wide variety of issues. On one occasion when I was at a hotel, I was talking to a wonderful young lady from our Black heritage community, and an individual walked up to us and asked her how long she had been in Canada. The individual in question was somewhat offended, and understandably so, because if the person had understood Canadian heritage and our history, I am sure that person would have realized it was a silly question to ask. I suspect that if I had been standing beside someone from the European community, from a Caucasian community, who had just landed at the city of Winnipeg airport and walked into the hotel, it would not have been an issue. The question would not have been asked. I draw the contrast between Senator Bernard's account and an incident of this nature.

I believe at my core that Canada's greatest asset is our diversity. We should be looking at a way in which we can champion that. Canada should be showing the world just how important diversity is and how valuable it is to our society.

I believe that provincial Hansard from decades ago would show that I talked about how the best way to combat racism is to deal with it through education and that it needs to be incorporated into the curriculum of our schools. I have taken the issue very seriously virtually from day one, as Sharon Carstairs, the leader of the party, appointed me on the issues of tourism and ethnic diversity. I attended things such as Folklorama, where in my first year, I believe I went to 26 different pavilions, where I was able to be baptized in the many different cultures and heritages that make us who we are as a nation, at least in part. Our diversity is something we should all be very proud of.

● (1110)

However, there is an ugly side that is real, that is tangible and that hurts Canadians every day of the year. Whether the Conservatives may want to turn a blind eye to it or not in certain areas, the government will not do that. That is the reason we have Bill C-9 before us. The Prime Minister has recognized it and made it a priority issue. It is a part of the series of crime bills we have brought forward, and we are looking for the Conservative Party to recognize the harm that is caused by hatred here in Canada.

Government Orders

The Conservative Party has an opportunity to get onside and support Canada's diversity, whether it is ethnic background, religious background or social behaviours. Every Canadian has the right to feel safe in the environment in which they live. We should all take pride in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and when we see racist action being taken, whether it is innocent or is intentionally done, we all have a responsibility to call it out. We are leaders of our community, and as such we need to take a stand on the issue, which is why I wanted to start my comments with that very important issue.

I appeal to my Conservative friends to take a look at the consequences of voting no on Bill C-9, and this is where I will get into the religious component. There is so much misinformation spread through social media and through false information that is being talked about here on the floor of the House of Commons, and it needs to be dealt with. Opposition members need to be held accountable for the things they are actually doing and saying.

It is not very often that I take a quote from the Toronto Sun, but this is from Joseph Neuberger, who provided a story to the Toronto Sun that was published in January. He said, "I write as a criminal lawyer with more than 32 years of experience, and as the chair of the Canadian Jewish Law Association." The article continues, and it is perfectly clear: "Religious freedom in Canada is firmly protected by the Charter. That protection is well established and robust." He goes on to say, and I appeal to people to listen to this aspect very carefully, that "Bill C-9 does not weaken it." That is the truth. That is the reality.

Unfortunately, the Conservative Party of Canada, the far right element within the Conservative Party, has used this issue to whip up all sorts of anxiety and concerns that cannot be justified. Whether it is mosques, gurdwaras, temples or Christian churches of all forms, our faith community is intentionally being misled by Conservative propaganda, and I would like to give members some specific examples of that.

• (1115)

I have received a number of emails from the Conservative Party of Canada related to Bill C-9. This is from one: "the Liberals are waging a war on religious freedom. Their goal is to expose people of faith to criminal prosecution for a simple act of quoting their own sacred texts." That is shameful. It goes on: "These attacks on freedom of expression and freedom of religion are shocking and completely unacceptable. This must be STOPPED at once." If we go to the bottom of the email, it says, "Donate now."

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member from across the way asked, "What's wrong with that?" If he does not understand the challenge in terms of ethical behaviour that the current far right within the Conservative Party has today, it is a very serious issue to use to ask for, to raise, money.

There are other emails I have received, such as this one: "Kevin, for 10 years the Liberals have been trying to control what you can see and say... C-9 would punish Canadians for quoting scriptures the government considers politically incorrect." What a bunch of crap that is. I withdraw the word "crap", but it is true.

Again, that came from the Conservatives. They pump out hundreds, if not thousands, of emails. Here is another one: "The Liberals and Bloc", so the Bloc has been included on this one, "want to prosecute people for quoting Scripture. They are trying to push laws that could criminalize passages from the Bible, the Quran, the Torah, and other sacred texts." If we go a little further down, the email asks people to add their name, so the Conservatives are actually mining. They go out and promote hatred. At the end of the day, they are trying to cash in on their promotion and are mining to get additional support.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am honest. I am actually quoting Conservative emails, and I can say that there are a lot more emails with regard to Bill C-9.

With respect to what Bill C-9 actually would do, I provided a quote providing those assurances. It would deal with hatred in Canada in different ways. It would protect our institutions, whether they are community centres, Christian churches, Sikh gurdwaras, temples, mosques and synagogues, from protests that are intimidating to people who want to be able to attend. It would protect us from hatred-driven or hatred-motivated offences, whether they are assaults or mentally related issues, if I can put it that way. Those are the types of things that are tangible and that the legislation would actually deal with.

The Prime Minister has said that we want to include Bill C-9 in a series of bills dealing with crime. We made a commitment in the last federal election to deal with hatred, and that is what this legislation would do. It would be a fulfillment of an election platform that we made just last year when Canadians chose a new Prime Minister and a new government. In fact, today, among the Liberal benches, there are 70-plus new Liberal members of Parliament, not to mention a new Prime Minister.

• (1120)

A series of actions has been taken to deal with crime. I will make quick reference to some of them, and I want to provide some additional thoughts on the hate file. I can say that every Liberal caucus member recognizes that, as a government, we want to do something to deal with hate, something of substance and a reflection of what members have been hearing from the constituents they represent. That is what is reflected in this bill. We also believe that it would meet any constitutional challenge and that it complements the Charter of Rights. These are the changes that we believe are in the best interests of the public.

If we contrast that to those in opposition to the bill, I would suggest we need to look at the motivation behind it, as I have already articulated, issues such as data mining, fundraising and catering to a far-right element of society. That seems to be their motivation, not what is in the public good or the best interests of Canadians. There is a responsibility of all members to be straightforward on some of the things being said in this House because of the anxiety and concerns being raised in our faith communities. Whether they are leaders in faith facilities or members of a congregation, there is nothing in the legislation that would prevent the types of things we are hearing talked about and preached about in synagogues, PAOC churches or other faith facilities.

Government Orders

There is very little tolerance in Canada for hatred and terrorism by the constituents we represent. I would ask members to reflect on that and for the Conservatives to reconsider their positioning. They do not have to vote against this legislation. I have heard a lot of arguments from the Conservatives, many hours of argument, and I have done a lot of reading. Not one argument that has been presented, I believe, has any legitimacy or justification for voting against this legislation. It seems to be more of a self-serving argument as opposed to what is in the public best interest.

I referred to a series of legislation and I want to highlight them. We have Bill C-9, the combatting hate act, that we are debating today, Bill C-12, the new borders act and asylum issue, Bill C-14, the bail and sentencing reform legislation, Bill C-16, which would reinstate mandatory minimums and highlights new legislation dealing with feminism and coercive action, and Bill C-22, which deals with lawful access. There is a suite of crime and hate legislation that is real, tangible and would make our communities safer. That is what our constituents want.

My last appeal would be for members to look at those bills as a holistic package and get behind what the Government of Canada is doing to make our communities safer.

* * *

• (1125)

POINTS OF ORDER

CORRECTION TO OFFICIAL RECORD

Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I mistakenly voted while paired this morning, so I would like to request unanimous consent to withdraw my vote on division 162, the motion to proceed to orders of the day, taken earlier this day.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to correct the record?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I wish to inform the House that pursuant to order made on Monday, June 15, the Standing Committee on Finance deposited with the Clerk of the House the third report of the committee.

[*English*]

The committee considered Bill C-30, an act to implement certain provisions of the spring economic update tabled in Parliament on April 28, 2026, and reported it with amendments.

* * *

COMBATTING HATE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I heard the hon. member mention frequently that there was an election in which we elected a Prime Minister. I know this may seem pedantic, but we do not elect prime ministers in this country. Under Westminster parliamentary democracy, each member in this place is equal to every other member. Every constituent has the choice to elect their member of Parliament. If their member of Parliament happens to be the leader of a party, and that party has the most seats in the House or can hold the confidence of the House, that person becomes prime minister, with no particular constitutional authority. We certainly do not directly elect them as is done in the United States.

I know it may seem pedantic, but we did not elect the current Prime Minister; we elected our own MPs. Only the people in Nepean elected the Prime Minister. Beyond that, we did not elect a CEO. We did not elect a dictator. We elected a Parliament. Parliament needs to do its work. I find time allocation and programming motions offensive to those principles.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary wants to comment.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, absolutely. I wish I would be given the time to give a full answer on it.

When people go to the voting booth, they exercise their vote, and the names of the local candidates are on the ballot. However, to deny the fact that people vote for the leader of political parties, the party itself and the local candidate is to deny reality.

At the end of the day, people contrasted our Prime Minister to the leader of the official opposition and others. Ultimately, the support garnered for the leader helped a lot of Liberal candidates get elected in the last federal election.

With respect to time allocation, I can say to my friend opposite that Peter Van Loan, who sat two desks ahead of me, would do the same sort of thing. He brought time allocation over 100 times in the last few years of the Harper government.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lestiguj, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague has provided an accurate description of the turmoil and concerns that Bill C-9 has caused among the people.

Does he not acknowledge that the government may have failed to explain Bill C-9 properly, allowing the situation to escalate because of what appears to be incorrect information? What will the government do differently next time to explain its legislative initiatives more effectively?

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I have had the opportunity, as has every member of Parliament I am sure, to address this issue, which has become fairly contentious because of the misinformation funnelled through the House of Commons by one political entity, the Conservative Party. However, I believe the majority of Canadians will become much more familiar with and see the benefits of the legislation as a whole. Therefore, I am expecting the legislation to, in fact, pass. We all have a job to do to alleviate the concerns that have been raised by the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. parliamentary secretary made reference to one of the symbols noted in the amendment, which is the noose. As he knows, it is an issue of particular importance to Black Canadians. I wonder if he could discuss why it is important to list symbols such as the noose as hate symbols.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question because it allows me to highlight what Senator Bernard indicated. I made reference to it at the very beginning of my speech. It is a fairly long quote, but the essence of it is an individual who was sitting around a dinner table, then went out for an evening walk, where there was all sorts of language used by someone driving a truck toward her, telling her to go back to Africa, and on the truck was a noose. It would be exceptionally intimidating and life-threatening. Racism to that degree hurts in many different ways. To deny that reality, I think, does a great disservice.

As parliamentarians, I think we need to recognize where Canadians are hurt by symbols, and take action. That is exactly what Bill C-9 would do.

• (1135)

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Madam Speaker, throughout the debate, I have heard the Conservatives make reference to, “Why do we need this bill at all? We already have existing laws.” It is really surprising to me, hearing that come from the Conservatives, considering they claim to be tough on crime and want longer sentences.

In this bill, a simple assault committed due to hate would go from five years to 10 years in prison. Sexual assault with a weapon causing bodily harm would go from 14 years to life in prison. This bill would provide for longer, appropriate sentences and appropriate punishment for those who commit crimes involving hate.

I want to know what the parliamentary secretary thinks about that. Are the Conservatives even tough on crime anymore?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, our secretary of state has highlighted Bill C-9, but it is not that alone. We also have Bill C-16, as the secretary of state knows full well, wherein we would be reinstating mandatory minimums and leading changes to criminal laws, dealing with femicide, as an example, by dealing with the issue of coercive behaviour from a partner. The Conservatives are opposing that legislation too. It really does make one wonder why it is that they like to talk tough and raise money on the issue of crime, but when it comes time to vote and get the legislation through, they

are nothing more than a barrier. They go out of their way to prevent legislation from passing.

I appreciate the question because it highlights the roadblock the Conservatives continue to put up on us making our communities safer.

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.): Madam Speaker, who here does not believe that all Canadians should live free of hate? I cannot fathom how the Conservatives cannot support this legislation, how they can position freedom of expression and freedom of religion against combatting hate, as if this bill would not defend and protect people's charter-protected rights to freely express themselves. Hate is the very thing that has people afraid to express themselves, to worship the way they choose to worship. It is unfathomable to me that the Conservatives have taken the position that they have, that they are somehow opposed to combatting hate. It is just deplorable.

I wonder if my colleague, who made a great intervention in the House, would speak to just how shocking and appalling it is.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we have seen today's Conservative Party continue to move further and further to the right. It has become an extreme right that is dominating the House leadership within the Conservative Party. We see that more and more, and I do not say that lightly.

If we take a look at it, not one Conservative has stood up and asked me a question about my comments. I suspect it is because they are a little reluctant, given the seriousness of the debate, and they recognize the weakness, and, in fact, that they are making a mistake, by not getting behind Bill C-9. Instead of getting behind it, they are allowing their House leadership team to continue to promote and get out misinformation on the issue.

[Translation]

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to add to that because I do not believe that anyone is opposed to peace, which is the opposite of hatred. This bill will help us build a new Canada that is fundamentally committed to promoting peace.

Could my colleague offer his comments and explain why the opposition continues to fight this bill?

• (1140)

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, to pick up on the first part of the member's comments, Canada is a diverse country. Our diversity is one of the greatest strengths that we have, and we can demonstrate leadership throughout the world by passing legislation of this nature and cherishing our diversity.

Government Orders

Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I rise on a topic of great concern to people in my community and to many Canadians from coast to coast. Perhaps no piece of legislation in this place has drawn as much public interest as Bill C-9.

Combined, our offices have received tens of thousands of emails from concerned citizens opposed to the bill. The bill is about trust: who we trust with our beliefs, who we trust with our words and whether we can still trust that the government will protect our right to hold both. That trust is challenged when 240,000 postcards to MPs and senators remain in boxes at the Senate, undelivered.

I have personally sponsored and presented petitions that have received signatures from people who value free speech and civil liberties. In my community of Cambridge, whether it is at events or just in the parking lot of a grocery store, I have had people come up to me to say that I should not let this one pass without a fight.

It is no secret that religious freedom across this nation is under threat. We have seen churches burned, people threatened in the streets, synagogues vandalized and violence amongst different groups of people. This is not what life was like in Canada just a few years ago. Conservatives unequivocally condemn this hatred, and we want the chaos in our streets to come to an end.

The government would have people believe that the response, Bill C-9, is some innocent bill. It calls it the combatting hate act. Nobody here is opposed to combatting hate. Nobody wants their church, temple or mosque to be attacked, but that is not what the debate is about. The debate is about whether the tool the government has chosen to use to address hatred is one that respects the very liberties that make Canada the best country on earth. It is about whether the legislation would actually protect religious freedom or just restrict it further.

When people from across the political spectrum, from the Canadian Labour Congress to Catholic bishops, Muslim imams, rabbis, academics, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and more, come out in opposition to the bill, I think we know what the answer is. Their main concern centres around the removal of the religious text defence under section 319 of the Criminal Code.

I would also like to recognize that I would like to split my time.

For years, Canadians who expressed a sincere, honest religious belief have had a legal defence available to them when they expressed views on moral and social questions. That defence existed to protect freedom of conscience, freedom of religion and freedom of expression, which are enshrined in our charter. That was not a loophole. It was a deliberate choice by Parliament to recognize that sincere religious expression deserves protection, even when others find it uncomfortable.

The Liberals, with help and encouragement from the Bloc Québécois, agreed to strip that defence out of the Criminal Code. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops warned that this would create a chilling effect on religious expression. One wrote that Canadians should not be criminally prosecuted for sincere, truth-seeking expression made without malice and based in centuries of religious tradition. He is right. The people in my community, from all faiths and backgrounds, wrote to me to say the same thing. They are afraid, not because they want to spread hatred, but

because they are now uncertain whether what they believe and how they speak about it could one day be used against them in a court of law.

Members can think about what that chilling effect looks like in practice: a pastor who self-censors a sermon because he is not sure where the line is anymore; a mother or father who is uncertain whether what they say around the dinner table could one day be characterized as something it was never intended to be; and the person who fought their way out of addiction through faith, who credits their belief with saving their life and who now wants to share that story openly, to tell others there is another way. That person now has to wonder whether speaking from their own lived experience, drawing on the very thing that pulled them back from the edge, could one day be used against them in a court of law.

I have heard from all of them, people who picked up the phone or sat down to write to me because they genuinely do not know what the bill would mean for their lives.

The government itself has mused about this. The Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture, one of the people in charge of writing, introducing and implementing the bill, named specific parts of the Bible he found hateful. There is little in the bill to stop him from acting on those beliefs once it is passed.

● (1145)

Let us talk about what the bill would not do. It would not actually address the root causes of hatred or offer the tools many people in our communities are asking for as they deal with this new wave of hatred. Burning a church, attacking a synagogue or calling for the death of someone in a particular religious group is already illegal. Bill C-9 would not have stopped any of the heinous offences we have seen in the news over the past months and years.

We already have laws against obstruction, against threats and against the incitement of violence. If those laws are not being enforced consistently, the answer is not to add new vague offences. The answer is to resource law enforcement and the courts to apply existing law with consistency and fairness. The answer is also to not ram a divisive, threatening bill through the House of Commons under the guise of unity and freedom.

Government Orders

The government introduced this bill only a few months ago. It has silenced the opposition and made backroom deals to move it forward. It has ignored organizations of all stripes and the tens of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands, of Canadians from communities like mine who took the time to write, call and petition. This is not how we stop hatred. This is how we build resentment.

This bill would amend the Criminal Code. It is not a minor administrative matter. Changes to the Criminal Code affect every Canadian in every province and every courthouse in the country. They affect what can be prosecuted, what defences are available and what the state can do to a citizen who says the wrong thing at the wrong moment.

This deserves more than a rushed timeline brokered with the Bloc Québécois, while the official opposition was left on the outside. The tens of thousands of Canadians who wrote to MPs like me deserve a full debate. The Catholic bishops deserve a full debate. The Muslim imams deserve a full debate. Even the rabbis and civil liberty advocates who raised the alarm bells deserve a full debate. The pastors, teachers and parents who contacted my office deserve a full debate.

I want to close by bringing this back to the people who sent me here. There is a woman in my neighbourhood, someone who has given decades to our community, who wrote me a letter about the bill. She is a woman of faith. She told me she is not a hateful person. She would never want anyone to be targeted, threatened or made to feel unsafe. She asked me in plain and honest language if the bill would mean that what she believes about the world, drawn from her faith, could one day be used against her in a courtroom. She asked if this bill means her grandchildren will live in a country where sincere belief is a liability.

I did not have a reassuring answer for her, and that is precisely the problem. When a law aimed at combatting hate creates fear in the hearts of law-abiding, community-minded, faithful Canadians, when it drives them to petition their MP and write letters by hand, something has gone wrong in the drafting, in the process and in the government's willingness to listen.

Our party, at its core, is about protecting what is worth protecting: the freedom to speak, to believe, to gather and to live according to our conscience without the state breathing down our neck. It is about trusting Canadians rather than managing them. It is about building policies that are durable, fair and based in common sense, not laws that are stitched together in backroom deals and rushed through a House that was not given adequate time to examine its implications.

When people in my community hand me petitions and write to me by the thousands to oppose Bill C-9, they expect me to be their voice in Ottawa. They trust me to stand here to say clearly that this bill, in its current form, goes too far. The government has consulted too little and sacrificed the freedoms of too many Canadians in the name of a goal that could have been achieved more carefully, more fairly and more honestly.

I am proud to be their voice in a Parliament that needs to hear it, because that trust, the trust Canadians place in Parliament to get it right, is worth protecting. I will never stop fighting for it.

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.): Madam Speaker, although I disagree with much of the speech of the member opposite, what I wanted to know from her is, since this bill proposes a stand-alone hate offence in the Criminal Code, which essentially doubles up on other offences, if someone in her community were to commit a theft, for example, of a convenience store, but they did it based on a hate motivation, does she believe that person should have a tougher sentence? This is what I want to know from the member.

Is she tough on crime? Does she believe a hate-motivated crime should be a tougher offence?

● (1150)

Connie Cody: Madam Speaker, the member across the way is the one who has been fighting against mandatory minimums, so I do not see how he is going to want to be strengthening the laws.

The Liberals created this problem, and the Conservatives have the solution. Removing the religious defence will not make Canadians safer. It will not stop repeat offenders. It will not stop violent criminals, and it will not stop gang violence. It will not stop extortion. It will not stop human trafficking, and it will not stop criminals who continue to terrorize communities across Canada. What we need is for the laws we currently have to be strengthened and enforced.

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, we listened to the Liberals earlier, especially the member for Winnipeg North, bash and attack anyone who disagrees with Bill C-9, actually in fear that they are all far right, right-wing, crazy white supremacists if they oppose the government on this.

However, we have seen the leadership of all the Abrahamic faiths in Canada oppose big parts of Bill C-9. I wonder if my colleague agrees that perhaps there is more to this issue that needs to be studied and that we should not just label everyone who opposes it as being racist, as the Liberals seem to be doing.

Connie Cody: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely correct. Anti-Semitism is real, and Jewish communities deserve protection, but the Criminal Code already provides that.

A lawyer the Liberals themselves brought to committee said Bill C-9 would not criminalize anything that is not already illegal. The real conversation is about why existing hate crime laws are not being enforced consistently. We agree on the goal of protecting vulnerable communities. The question is whether duplicating existing law, while removing the religious text defence, actually gets us there.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am going to ask my colleague the same question I asked earlier. I hope I get an answer by the end of the debate.

Bill C-9 contains interpretive clauses specifically intended to ensure that under no circumstances are individuals prevented from practising the religion of their choice or communicating the contents of a biblical text. The following involves subsections 319(2) and 319(2.2):

For greater certainty, nothing in subsection 319(2) or (2.2) of the *Criminal Code* shall be construed as prohibiting a person from communicating a statement on a matter of public interest, including an educational, religious, political or scientific statement made in the course of a discussion, publication or debate, if they do not willfully promote hatred against an identifiable group by communicating the statement.

Why is my colleague not reassured by Bill C-9's interpretive clauses?

[English]

Connie Cody: Madam Speaker, Canada's hate speech laws currently provide a defence against prosecutions for the wilful promotion of hatred where a person, in good faith, expresses an argument or opinion on a religious subject based on a belief found in a religious text.

The defence applies only to that specific offence. It does not apply to advocating genocide or counselling violence or threats. It does not apply to any other Criminal Code offence. Calls to incite hatred or violence, whether cloaked in religion or not, are already illegal and are not protected by the religious defence.

Roman Baber (York Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is finally sunny in Ottawa, but to me, this is one of the darkest weeks in the history of Canadian democracy. Bill C-9 is back in the House after a brief stint in the Senate that did not make a dent in the problems with the bill.

Predicated on false pretenses, the repeal of the religious defence to hate speech remains. The new hatred offence would still criminalize conduct, contrary to a civil statute. Nothing that minority communities are actually worried about in terms of security would be changed by Bill C-9. The Liberals are ramming it through at the end of the summer sitting as the government-subsidized media is already at the cottage.

In the same week, the Liberals are ramming through Bill C-22, a bill that would require telecoms and Internet companies to seize all Canadian metadata, including their geographic location and who they called or texted in the last year, without their having committed an offence and without a search warrant. Bill C-22 would allow the Minister of Public Safety to order Internet providers to break encryption, something that has never been done before, even though every security expert is sounding the alarm that the privacy of law-abiding Canadians would be at major risk.

In the same week, the Liberals are also introducing Bill C-34, the digital safety act. Of course, we have to protect children, but that does not mean that we have to deny children their charter rights to access media communications, which is an explicit right, or prevent them from communicating with each other through popular apps. It

is a plan that failed in Australia and that will fail everywhere else. Unless we are prepared to implement a Beijing-style, authoritarian Internet surveillance regime, this is unenforceable. Are Canadians ready for that? Obviously, they are not.

In the same week, which is the last week before the legislature rises, the Liberals are introducing so-called privacy legislation, which would eliminate the Privacy Commissioner in favour of their so-called digital safety czar, who would regulate, enforce and judge all at the same time. This would be a Liberal government appointee reigning over what we do on the Internet, with unlimited powers over how we communicate and how the world's most innovative companies do business. Surely by coincidence, the same thing is now happening in England this week, and it just happened in Australia.

I was trained in the common law. It was the beacon of hope for any modern civilization. Anywhere the common law went, prosperity followed, but now we have these egomaniacs, career technocrats and misguided lefties who think they know better than everyone telling us how to live for our own benefit and how to keep us safe. I want to be safe from them.

Bill C-9 would do nothing to protect the Jewish or Muslim communities. It would not protect any community. This entire thing has been a major Liberal failure.

The Liberals wanted to eliminate the Attorney General's ability to consent to prosecutions. They realized how bad an idea it was and rolled it back. They wanted to redefine the term "hatred". It is a definition that the Supreme Court used for 40 years. I am proud of this. It is one of the greatest accomplishments of my career that the Liberals have accepted my amendment to keep the old definition of hatred and not dilute it. People would not have to go to jail when they offend someone.

Just when I thought we were out of the woods, I saw the digital safety bill that attempts to regulate harmful conduct online. Surprise, surprise. Harmful content would include content that foments hatred. The bill states, "content that foments hatred means content that expresses detestation or vilification of an individual or group". The Liberals are at it again. We just fixed the definition in Bill C-9, and now they have come back with a digital safety bill to regulate our conduct online and they have a different definition for hatred. Why is it "detestation or vilification", not "detestation and vilification", as the Supreme Court says? Where is the extreme or intense emotion that is required by the Supreme Court, like we agreed on in Bill C-9? Where is that in the digital safety act?

Government Orders

Why do the Liberals hate freedom of speech so much? The Liberals hate it because they are afraid of the truth. The Senate was asked to fix the new stand-alone motivated offence in Bill C-9, because this new offence that the Liberals dreamt up would not target criminal conduct only. It would target any offence under any act of Parliament. For example, people could violate the digital safety act or the human rights code, and that may attract criminal prosecution. The Liberals are turning our democracy into a banana republic.

• (1155)

Earlier, I heard the member for Whitby ask my colleague why she is opposed to a new hate-motivated offence. Does she not want someone to be punished when they engage in hatred? First of all, hatred is already an aggravating circumstance in sentencing, so do not give us that. Second of all, if the Liberals want to introduce another offence, introduce it for criminal offences. Do not penalize civil conduct, thereby putting civil conduct at risk of criminal prosecution.

The Liberals tout all of these benefits for the Jewish community, which is my own community. Let me tell the House something about what has transpired here. Everything the Liberals have done to clarify any existing law is already in law. They say they will have to protect people's ability to enter synagogues and be free from obstruction. We are already free from obstruction in entering a synagogue. Nobody can obstruct me from entering a synagogue. That is called assault.

How about intimidation? People should be free from intimidation when entering a school. Of course, that has not stopped the multiple school shootings that have happened in my riding. Nothing is happening about those. It is already a criminal offence to intimidate someone entering a school. It is called intimidation contrary to section 423 of the Criminal Code.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Roman Baber: Mr. Speaker, they are heckling me because they know I am right. They are heckling me because they cannot handle what they are doing here. I welcome their heckling. I wear it as a badge of honour.

The only thing the Liberals would do is eliminate the religious defence to an allegation of hate speech, and it is all because the Bloc says a guy named Charkaoui was not charged for calling for the extermination of the enemies of Gaza. The Montreal police said very clearly he was not charged because "the enemies of the people of Gaza" were not a identifiable group of people so as to attract prosecution under subsection 319(1) of the Criminal Code. It is not because of the religious defence.

The religious defence does not apply to incitement to violence. Everyone knows that. The Bloc knows that. The Liberals know that. The religious defence that the Liberals are looking to repeal does not apply. It does not excuse incitement to violence. A religious defence does not apply to statements that are not spoken in good faith. Calling for the extermination of people is not good faith.

This is a charade. The main operation of the bill is predicated on a lie. The more lies we get, the more we go down a rabbit hole, like

we did with Bill C-9 and Bill C-22, the digital safety act, and as we will now with the changes to the Privacy Act that would eliminate the Privacy Commissioner.

Leave us alone and enforce the law. Stop trying to keep us safe. We need to be safe from the Liberal government.

I am blessed to represent one of the largest Jewish communities in the country. Every Sunday, thugs come to Sheppard and Bathurst and intimidate local neighbours. They deny us the enjoyment of property. That is mischief. Every Sunday, they try to walk down Sheppard and then make a right into Bathurst Manor or left into Clanton Park. That is intimidation. Every week, we see the arson or firebombing of a Jewish business or a store. Those are called assault or arson.

Ryan Turnbull: You do not want to protect them.

Roman Baber: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say I do not want to protect them, but I am pleading for help for my Jewish community. They are telling me that repealing the religious defence would do something about it. It would not, but enforcing existing laws would. That would send a message. We should do that, instead of sending another \$100 million to Palestine and instead of hearing the Prime Minister accusing the state of Israel, which is engaged in a lawful, self-defence war, of engaging in genocide in Gaza. That, in fact, fuels hatred against the Jewish community.

The Prime Minister fuels violence and hatred against the Jews by engaging in the greatest libel of the 21st century, which is that the state of Israel is engaging in genocide. The Prime Minister recognized the state of Palestine on the eve of Rosh Hashanah. We will never forget that. It was all for electoral politics.

We should all be ashamed of the government for the way it is treating the Jewish community and the way it has betrayed all of us. We will never forget it.

What the Liberals are doing to usurp Canadian democracy is inexcusable. Shame on all of them.

• (1200)

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 come from a community in the Durham region, which has Chabad, a Jewish community centre. It has active members of the Jewish community who exercise their faith, go to their synagogue and have their own community centres and places of worship. They have asked for this legislation. In fact, they have supported it from day one, because they have experienced acts of hate in our community throughout the Durham region.

Government Orders

They have asked the Government of Canada to amend the Criminal Code to offer more protections so that they can express themselves, worship the way they choose to worship in their community and feel protected and safe. We also have CIJA, the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center and B'nai Brith Canada, which have all supported this legislation. I can read the quotes.

Does the member opposite not believe that anything those organizations—

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

• (1205)

Roman Baber: Mr. Speaker, all those organizations have done is undermine everything they wanted to do initially—

Ryan Turnbull: You do not think they are useful.

Roman Baber: Excuse me.

Mr. Speaker, B'nai Brith said they wanted to repeal the Attorney General's consent. What did the Liberals do? They rolled it back, because CIJA told them not to do it. CIJA told them not to criminalize civilized conduct. Did they listen to it? No.

What did they do for the religious organizations? They called them last week. I saw them in the Ottawa airport lounge and told them we are going to announce a commission on anti-Semitism. Who did the government bring in to that commission? Omar Al-ghabra. He lobbied to keep Hezbollah off the terrorist list.

This is the same government that paid Marouf millions of dollars, knowing he was promoting anti-Semitism. Do not do us any favours. We are not asking for this. We are asking that basic laws be honoured. Assault, intimidation, mischief—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Essex.

Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Order.

The hon. member for Essex.

Chris Lewis: Mr. Speaker, it is an awfully heavy day in the House today, when we are supposed to collectively be trying to bring peace and unity not only to Canada, but to the world. Hearing the heckling toward my hon. colleague is pretty darn embarrassing. Equally, though, I am darn proud of the member for standing up for what is right.

What is not in the bill, or what is totally missing? What needs to be put in the bill to ensure that people are safe?

Roman Baber: Mr. Speaker, there is one loophole that needs to be closed. It is the wilful promotion of terrorism.

My bill, Bill C-257, was endorsed by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. In fact, the contents of Bill C-257 somehow magically made it into the member for Mount Royal's amendments to Bill C-9, and then he was instructed to withdraw them. The one thing the Jewish community actually asked for was criminalizing the wilful promotion of terrorism. The Liberal member for

Mount Royal wanted to bring it in, in furtherance to my bill, Bill C-257, and he was instructed to withdraw it—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member is rising on a point of order.

Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I fail to understand the relevance of the member's speaking to a completely different bill, which has nothing to do with Bill C-9.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): That is not a point of order.

The hon. member has about 10 seconds left.

Roman Baber: Mr. Speaker, it was brought in as an amendment to this very bill. The member for Mount Royal wanted to amend Bill C-9 to criminalize the wilful promotion of terrorism, but the government would not allow him to.

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about underlying crimes that are in the code already, such as assault or mischief. This bill would take the penalties for those crimes and double them for people who would dare prevent somebody from going into their synagogue.

I know the community is supportive of this bill, because it would give longer and more meaningful, substantial penalties for those who commit hate crimes in Canada.

Roman Baber: Mr. Speaker, nobody is mixed up. In fact, the government has eliminated and deleted the previous mischief and arson provisions for places of worship and added a much more difficult standard. By adding the fact that the act on which we could predicate one of those offences has to be wilfully promoting hate, they have actually made it tougher to convict of mischief or arson of places of worship. Mark Sandler even told them so.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time.

In Canada, no one should feel unsafe because of who they are, their religious practices, or where they gather. However, recently we have seen an increase in hate crimes. As members of Parliament, we cannot stand idly by. We must take action.

Bill C-9 introduces a targeted set of reforms to the Criminal Code to protect safe access to community spaces, address hate crimes and clarify the legal definition of hate. Bill C-9 also expands the existing offence of wilful promotion of hatred by recognizing a modern expression of hate: the public display of hateful or terrorist symbols. We thereby recognize that when a person displays certain symbols with the intent to deliberately promote hatred, this constitutes a separate offence.

Today, we are focusing specifically on the proposed Senate amendment to add the noose to the list of symbols of hate. The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights has heard from numerous witnesses and organizations who have stated that the noose is a recognized symbol of terror and intimidation against Black people and that it should be treated in the same manner under the new offence relating to hate symbols. I sincerely believe that when people targeted by these symbols courageously come forward to testify before a parliamentary committee, whether in the House of Commons or the Senate, to explain how a symbol is perceived as an instrument of violence, threat, and hatred directed at them, we have a duty to listen to them.

The noose is closely associated with the history of racial lynchings that have left their mark on North America. It has been used to terrorize, humiliate and control Black communities for generations by making them feel that they were neither safe in their own communities nor fully accepted within society. Its use against Black people is a form of racial intimidation and a symbol associated with violence and white supremacy. There is nothing ambiguous about it. Displaying it in a workplace, in an educational institution, at a demonstration or elsewhere in the public sphere goes beyond the bounds of legitimate expression. When it is used to target or intimidate Black people, it then symbolizes real acts of persecution, violence and hatred. As a Canadian citizen, I believe that we should all be concerned when such symbols are used to promote hatred against colleagues, friends or members of our communities. Combatting hate is not just an issue for those who are directly affected by it. It is a responsibility shared by society as a whole. Even when we are not personally targeted by hate symbols, we cannot remain silent. As members of Canadian society, we have a duty to strongly condemn behaviours that seek to intimidate, exclude or terrorize some of our fellow Canadians. This goes to the very nature of living together in harmony. Especially when members of our communities are being targeted, being there for one another is what defines us as Canadians. Our diversity is a strength, but it can only thrive in a climate of respect, dignity and security.

Last night, I was appalled by the tone of the remarks made by certain Conservative colleagues, in particular those of the member for York—Durham. He downplayed the impact of the use of the noose in Canada, going so far as to say that it was odd to include it in the bill as a symbol of hate. I feel my colleague's remarks are inappropriate and deeply out of place. The MP's comments unfortunately demonstrate a lack of consideration for the experiences of many members of the Black community. Questioning the need to recognize the noose as a hate symbol is akin to downplaying the suffering, fear and trauma that this symbol evokes for those who have historically been targeted by racial violence. These remarks also show disregard for the testimony of many individuals and organizations who have come before parliamentarians to explain the historical and contemporary significance of this symbol. In this context, downplaying its significance sends a worrying message. It gives the impression that the concerns being expressed by the Black community are not being taken seriously. As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to listen, understand and acknowledge the realities experienced by communities affected by racism in order to build a fairer and more inclusive society. Brushing aside their concerns, as my colleague did last night, or questioning the legitimacy

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of their experiences does nothing to help build a more inclusive society. On the contrary, it risks trivializing behaviours that have no place in a democracy that respects the dignity of every individual.

● (1210)

These comments from the Conservative member are all the more concerning because they ignore the reality experienced by many Black Canadians. Hate crime data that is reported by police shows that Black people remain among the most frequently targeted groups for hate crimes based on race or ethnicity. Behind these statistics are individuals, families and communities that experience the real consequences of racism and intimidation.

In this context, it is difficult to understand why some people would choose to downplay the impact of a symbol that is widely recognized as a historical instrument of racial violence. Instead, we should be listening to affected communities and being serious about measures to protect them better. As legislators, we have a responsibility to act seriously, with sensitivity and respect, toward people who are the target of hate crimes. I sincerely hope that my colleague from York—Durham will retract his statement and reconsider what he said last night, because it was completely unacceptable. His statement has no place in the House or in society.

In Canada, there is no place for hatred or intimidation based on race, religion, ethnic origin or sexual orientation. We have a collective duty to build a country in which everyone can live, work, learn and practise their religion safely and without fear of being targeted or intimidated. That is why I support the Senate amendment to recognize the noose as a symbol of hate. Adopting the amendment sends a clear message. We have heard the affected communities, we acknowledge their experiences and we refuse to turn a blind eye to hatred. This is how we strengthen our shared way of life and the truly Canadian values of respect, equality and dignity.

I will use the last few minutes of my time to say that I am disappointed by the excessive partisanship we have seen in the debate on Bill C-9. In a debate as serious as this one, a debate about fighting hatred, about the lived experiences of people in our communities, we should be able to set partisanship aside and truly reflect on how to make our communities safer for everyone. We must rise to the occasion. Canadians expect us to elevate the level of debate, to rise above partisan games. Unfortunately, that is not what we have seen from the Conservative side.

I urge my colleagues to exercise caution and rigour in the tone and content of their remarks, particularly when it comes to issues as sensitive as combatting hate. Sensationalist slogans and simplistic statements designed to stir up people on social media have no place in such a serious debate. We are here to legislate responsibly, not to polarize public discourse.

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As lawmakers, we also have a duty to maintain a healthy social climate and to consider the consequences our words may have in the public sphere. Unfortunately, during the debate on Bill C-9, we also saw a major disinformation campaign circulating, particularly on social media. This campaign was fuelled in part by the remarks made by Conservative members of Parliament. As my colleague mentioned earlier, certain aspects of Bill C-9 have been completely distorted from reality and have even been used in the Conservative Party's political fundraising activities. I do not believe this is commensurate with the issues before us, and I find it deplorable.

Lastly, beyond the issue of hate symbols, Bill C-9 is an important step forward in a number of ways. For one thing, it includes a new obstruction offence that prohibits obstructing or interfering with lawful access to a building or structure used primarily for religious worship or by an identifiable group. This is indeed a problem. People must be able to enter the place they use for religious worship or gatherings in complete safety. This is fundamental. The bill also proposes a new intimidation offence that would prohibit behaviour meant to intimidate, threaten or frighten persons trying to access a building used primarily by an identifiable group or for religious worship.

These measures will make our communities safer for everyone. I am calling on all of my colleagues to support Bill C-9, now in the final stages of the legislative process, so that it can be implemented and address the very real concerns of our communities.

• (1215)

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my riding neighbour for his speech. My colleague represents a riding on the other side of our beautiful Chaleur Bay.

I want to ask him a question. He brought up remarks made yesterday in the House. I was there. It was about 11:50 p.m. He spoke on the importance of not repeating remarks that might be hurtful to others, yet by taking a few minutes of his speech to go over these remarks again, is he not contradicting himself?

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I was also in the House yesterday at that late hour. I actually do think that condemning it is entirely legitimate. We cannot remain silent when people make comments that minimize the repercussions that certain symbols can have on targeted communities.

I was not planning on speaking to Bill C-9 today, but after listening to my colleague, I wrote my speech this morning to call out those kinds of remarks. I also wanted to point out that witnesses appearing before the Senate explained why the noose should be included as a hate symbol in the bill. Minimizing these repercussions within the Parliament of Canada could have an impact on people listening to us. I found that—

• (1220)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Questions and comments, 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 appreciate my hon. colleague's support of this bill. I know that all members on this side of the House take this bill very seriously.

In my community of Whitby, we have seen acts of hate, including a swastika burned into the playground lawn in a local park behind a school. We saw a woman wearing a hijab almost get set on fire in a local library. These acts of hate are things that our government is seeking to address through this important legislation. Definitely, we had requests from the Jewish community at the outset, but also from many other communities that are impacted by hate.

Could the member opposite speak to how important it is to get this legislation done?

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, in Canada, no one should feel threatened or unsafe because of who they are, what religion they practise, or where they gather. This is essential.

Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, racism and homophobia have no place in Canada. For the sake of people who are victims of hateful behaviour, we have a duty to ensure that communities are safe for everyone. Bill C-9 includes several proposals that represent a significant step forward in ensuring that everyone, no matter who they are, can live in safe communities in Canada.

I urge all my colleagues to support this bill because it is essential.

Natilien Joseph (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague from the Bloc Québécois ask my colleague a question. To respond respectfully, I would like to ask my colleague a question that will help broaden the discussion a bit.

Does my colleague agree that elected officials have a responsibility to speak out against hate when it comes from people who support their own side?

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, I think that, as Canadian citizens, we all need to take notice when symbols are used to promote hate. We do not need to be personally affected. As members of Canadian society, we are all affected when our colleagues, friends or community members are the target of hateful behaviour.

Last night, we heard a Conservative member downplay the symbolic impact of the noose in Canada. He even said that it was odd to include it as a hate symbol in the bill. I think those remarks are completely out of place. That is why I rose in the House this morning to speak out against these remarks and to remind members about the importance of Bill C-9.

[*English*]

Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Minister of Heritage had suggested that passages of religious scripture could be viewed as hateful. We know that this government, which the member is a part of, has moved to limit debate once again, specifically on Bill C-9, since that is what we are debating, but it is happening on a lot of things.

I am wondering why the member thinks that his government should continue to ram this bill through before the end of the session instead of killing the bill and coming back with something that is not so divisive and that actually can unite Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I would rather hear my colleague tell me whether she supports the remarks made by her colleague from York—Durham. Yesterday, he made comments that downplayed the impact of the noose in Canada. He said it was odd to include it as a hate symbol. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

I would be very interested in hearing from more Conservative members and finding out what their positions are with respect to what their colleague said last night.

[*English*]

Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure and an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Windsor West. Today, I rise to speak on their behalf to Bill C-9.

Before I do, I would like to take a moment to recognize two brave police officers who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving their communities. Last week, Toronto police officer Marc Pinizzotto was killed in the line of duty while taking part in the execution of search warrants connected to a series of shootings, including attacks at the U.S. consulate and a synagogue in Toronto. Just days earlier, OPP officer Tarun Bali also lost his life while serving the people of Ontario. To their families, friends, loved ones and fellow officers, I offer my sincere condolences.

These losses hit close to home for me. More than 30 years ago, I began my career in public service as a police officer with the Toronto Police Service. I spent nearly seven years there before continuing my police career in the Windsor-Essex region, serving a total of 29 years in law enforcement. I still remember what it felt like to put on the uniform and head out on patrol. I remember the pride that came with it, but I also remember the risks that came with the job. Police officers leave home every day not knowing what the next radio call will bring. Their families understand that reality too.

That is why the deaths of Officer Pinizzotto and Officer Bali are felt so deeply, not just by their families and colleagues, but by police officers and former police officers across this country. Their

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sacrifice deserves our respect and our gratitude, and their memory deserves to be honoured. One officer came from an Italian Canadian family, the other from an Indo-Canadian family. Different backgrounds, different communities, yet both wore the same uniform, took the same oath and made the same sacrifice in service to Canada. They protected everyone. That is what police officers across this country do.

As I thought about these officers, I could not help but think about the debate we are having today. A police officer has lost his life while investigating violent criminals connected to attacks on places of worship and innocent people. That reality should remind all of us that hatred is not an abstract concept. It has real consequences. It destroys lives. It tears at communities. When left unchecked, it can lead to violence.

A few weeks ago, many Canadians joined Rwandan communities across this country by marking Kwibuka, the remembrance of genocide against the Tutsi people in Rwanda. Kwibuka means “to remember”. It is a solemn reminder of one of the darkest chapters in modern history. Last Saturday, I had the privilege of attending such a commemoration in Windsor, where I listened to Kizito Kalima, known to many as “Big Z”, and to other members of Windsor's Rwandan community as they shared stories of loss, resilience, reconciliation and hope. Their message was powerful. It was not a message rooted in bitterness or revenge. It was a message rooted in remembrance, healing, reconciliation and hope. That message stayed with me, and I believe it carries lessons for all Canadians.

Let me be absolutely clear: Canada is not Rwanda. Our institutions are strong. Our democracy is strong. Our people are united by far more than what divides us, but history still has lessons to teach us. One of those lessons is that hatred rarely begins with violence. It begins when people stop seeing their neighbours as fellow citizens. It begins when stereotypes replace understanding and when fear replaces trust. The lesson of Rwanda is not that hatred suddenly appeared. The lesson is that too many leaders ignored the warning signs for far too long. Fortunately, Canada is not facing those circumstances, but that does not mean we should ignore our responsibility to build trust, strengthen communities and unite Canadians.

General Dallaire has spent decades reminding Canadians that the lessons of Rwanda are not simply about one country at one moment in history. They are lessons about humanity. They are lessons about leadership. They are lessons about the responsibility we all share to confront hatred before it turns to violence. That is why this debate matters. Racism is real. Anti-Semitism is real. Islamophobia is real. Hinduphobia is real. Every one of us has a responsibility to challenge those things wherever they appear.

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However, laws alone cannot solve them. No Criminal Code amendment can teach respect, build trust or replace leadership. The words spoken by elected officials matter. The examples set by government matter. The way we speak about one another matters. Good intentions matter too, but good intentions alone are not enough. What ultimately matters is the results of government policies.

• (1225)

We are living in unprecedented times. Many Canadians are carrying real burdens. Some are worried about paying their bills. Some are worried about finding a home for their family. Some are worried about crime in their communities. Some are worried about discrimination and hatred. Some are worried about the future their children will inherit. When people are worried, frustrated or uncertain, the tone of public discussion can change. That does not excuse hatred, racism, anti-Semitism or Islamophobia, and it certainly does not excuse violence. However, it should remind us that leadership matters. The responsibility of leaders is to lower the temperature, build trust and bring people together around our common values. That is how strong societies remain strong. That is how diverse societies remain united.

The question before us is not whether hate is wrong. The question is whether Bill C-9 is necessary and whether it will achieve what the government says it will achieve. There are provisions in this legislation that deserve support. Every Canadian should be able to attend a church, synagogue, mosque, temple, gurdwara, community centre or school without fear of intimidation or violence. I also support the Senate amendment adding the noose as a prohibited symbol of anti-Black hate. As a former police officer, I understand the historical weight that symbol carries and the fear it is intended to create.

There is value in providing clarity to police officers and prosecutors dealing with such cases. After spending nearly three decades in policing, I tend to look at legislation through a very specific lens. I look at it and ask two questions. First, is it enforceable? Second, will it make Canadians safer without stepping on their rights and freedoms? Those are the questions all police officers ask. Those are the questions Parliament should be asking as well.

The government speaks as though Canada has no laws to deal with hate crimes. That is simply not true. We already have laws against the public incitement of hatred. We already have laws against the wilful promotion of hatred. We already have laws against threats, intimidation, harassment, vandalism and violence directed at people because of their religion, race, ethnicity or background. Judges can already impose tougher sentences when crimes are motivated by hate. These tools already exist.

The problem is not that we lack laws. The problem is having the courage to enforce the laws. This is where I believe the government is missing the point, unfortunately. Canadians are increasingly concerned about public safety. They are concerned about violent repeat offenders. They are concerned about organized crime, gang violence, extortion and human trafficking. They are concerned about the lack of consequences for repeat offenders. These concerns are real. They are being discussed around kitchen tables and at coffee shops across this country.

After 10 years of policies that have weakened confidence in our justice system, Canadians are asking whether Parliament is focused on the right priorities. Removing a long-standing protection for good-faith expression will not stop a gang shooting, a human trafficker or an extortion ring. It will not stop repeat violent offenders or the transnational gangs that continue to terrorize communities across Canada. Officer Pinizzotto was not investigating a sermon; he was investigating violent criminal activity. That is where the danger is, and that is where Canadians expect their government to be focused. As lawmakers, we should always ask whether a proposed law addresses the problem it claims to solve. In this case, I am not convinced it does.

One of the most significant concerns with this legislation involves the government's decision to remove long-standing protections in the Criminal Code for good-faith expression of religious beliefs. For decades, Canadian law has struck a careful balance. It protected vulnerable communities from genuine hatred while protecting good-faith expression of religious beliefs. That balance was not preventing police from investigating crimes or prosecutors from laying charges. It certainly did not stop courts from handing out convictions.

These distinctions matter. Acts of hatred, intimidation and vandalism should be investigated, prosecuted and punished. No one disputes that. However, the way we do it matters. At the end of the day, we have to understand that Canada's strength comes from our ability to live together despite our differences. It comes from our ability to disagree without being disagreeable. It comes from our willingness to remember that before we are Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats, Bloc members or Greens, we are Canadians.

As we remember Officer Pinizzotto and Officer Bali, let us remember what they were doing. They were protecting innocent people. They were protecting communities of every faith and every background. They were confronting violent criminals and standing up against those who would use fear, intimidation and violence to divide us. That is the Canada they served.

• (1230)

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, let me first thank the member opposite for his years of dedication and service. My father was a police officer for Peel Regional Police for 30 years, and I deeply respect our members of all police forces.

The law enforcement leaders in our communities on the front lines have been asking us for additional tools. The tough-on-crime agenda the Conservatives purport to support every single day in this House is all predicated on this idea that if only we had tougher laws and tougher penalties for serious crimes, everything would get better.

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The member opposite seems to lay blame at the feet of the forces that he was once a part of. It sounds to me like he does not care about changing the law and thinks that having tougher penalties does not matter. Can he speak to whether he thinks—

• (1235)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Windsor West.

Harb Gill: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. I would say that, yes, there is a lack of courage and a degree of timidity among the ranks, especially the higher ranks, not the frontline folks. They are ready to do the work they are assigned, but one has to have the courage to do what needs to be done. Courage has to be shown by prosecutors, as well as judges. When somebody drops the ball, it is not a judge who goes to a mic and answers questions, or a Crown prosecutor for that matter. The guy who is left holding the bag is the police officer, who has to explain why the judge made a certain decision or why the Crown prosecutor did not proceed. These are the challenges that our friends from the opposite side are not quite getting.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said that the laws already exist and that they need to be enforced. At least one area does require a legislative amendment, specifically the religious exemption for incitement to hatred. Under that exemption, anyone who quotes a passage from the Bible or the Quran to incite hatred will be protected and cannot be prosecuted.

Does my colleague agree that a legislative amendment is needed in that regard?

[*English*]

Harb Gill: That is incorrect, Mr. Speaker. The legislation already exists. If anybody, regardless of what text they use, is inciting violence against any Canadian, or non-Canadian for that matter, that is already an offence and we have the tools necessary to lay those charges. As I said, we just need the courage to lay those charges.

Amarjeet Gill (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has expressed many concerns in his speech on Bill C-9.

Bill C-9 removes the long-standing good-faith religious defence from the Criminal Code. As a justice and human rights committee member, I spoke with many religious leaders and faith communities who have expressed concerns that sermons, religious teachings and sacred texts could be drawn into a criminal investigation.

My question for the member is this: Why is the Liberal government weakening protections for freedom of religion instead of strengthening them?

Harb Gill: Mr. Speaker, Officer Pinizzotto did not die investigating a sermon. He died investigating hate crimes. He died investigating a shooting at the U.S. consulate.

I can tell members from experience that, generally speaking, police officers are not out there challenging people at a religious ceremony to say whether the sermon is allowed or not allowed. Police officers are not the experts. They do not have the wherewithal to do all of those things. The challenge is that when we have unclear leg-

islation, it causes confusion. That lack of clarity is going to cause more harm in our country, rather than solve any problems.

Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is one thing that I do not understand. If the member opposite is suggesting that we simply need the courage to enforce the law, and the laws already exist, why is it that the blame comes on the government to enforce those laws, when in fact it would be up to law enforcement, in accordance with the way our justice system works, to do that? I wonder if he could explain that a bit.

Harb Gill: Mr. Speaker, that is a very valid question. The question is about leadership. The leadership starts from the top. It starts with the government of the day. The government has to provide that leadership. The words should match the actions. Hence, we would have the results to prove that we are doing what we need to do.

Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, off the top, I will note that I will be splitting my time with the member for London—Fanshawe.

Canadians of faith must be free to practise their beliefs without fear of intimidation, violence or persecution. That freedom is fundamental. It was secured by the generations that came before us, and it has been defended time and again. It remains our responsibility to protect and safeguard it for generations to come.

There is no doubt that we are seeing a troubling rise in hate crimes across our country: Christian churches have been burned and vandalized, synagogues have been shot at and firebombed, mosques have been targeted and temples have been attacked. These are not just acts of vandalism; they target entire faith communities, undermine the sense of belonging and safety that these places provide and erode the fundamental freedom of Canadians to gather, worship and live out their beliefs in peace. This trend is serious. It demands attention. These crimes must be met with real consequences. Those who commit them must be prosecuted. The law must be enforced, and the government must show leadership. Threatening the religious freedom and expression of the very people being targeted is not the solution. That remains the serious concern with Bill C-9.

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It would not target just hate. Even as amended, Bill C-9 would still risk undermining the very religious freedom and freedom of expression that it should be strengthening. While the amended bill would add to the list of prohibited hate symbols, it would not undo the proposed removal of the religious defence in the Criminal Code. This defence has long been part of Canadian law. It was introduced when Parliament created our modern hate propaganda laws. At the time, Parliament made a deliberate choice to create strong laws to combat hate, but also to include clear safeguards. Those safeguards include defences for truth, for statements made in the public interest, for lack of intent and for good-faith religious expression. The purpose was simple: to ensure that while we prohibit hate, we do not criminalize belief; that Canadians can speak out about their faith; and that religious texts can be discussed, taught and debated without fear.

Let me be clear: The defence has never protected hate speech or calls to violence. If somebody promotes hatred or incites violence, that is already illegal, and it has always been illegal. The religious defence does not change that. It simply ensures that good-faith expression of religious belief is not swept into the Criminal Code. That balance has worked for decades. It is part of what has made our laws constitutional. In fact, the Supreme Court has recognized this protection as essential to keeping Canada's hate speech laws constitutional. It is part of what has protected both freedom of expression and freedom of religion in this country.

This bill, in its current form, would remove that safeguard, and it would do so not after years of study, a major review of the Criminal Code or broad consultation with Canadians. In fact, it was not even in the government's original bill, but was added later without evidence to support it. This would be a significant change to Canadian criminal law, and changes like this are rare. When Parliament has changed or removed legal defences in the past, it is done so carefully, after serious study, hearing from experts and consulting with Canadians. That did not happen here. Witnesses did not call for the change, nor did religious communities ask for this, yet the Liberals are pushing it through anyway. They could have split the bill and built consensus around those measures, and they would have had broad support. Instead, the Liberals are using procedural tools to limit debate and accelerate the passage of this divisive bill. That should concern every single member of the House, because this would not be a minor, technical change, but the removal of a long-standing protection that has been part of the balance in our law for over half a century. It would be removed without careful consideration that such a decision demands.

Canadians are paying attention, and they are sounding the alarm. I am hearing from my constituents, and I know colleagues in the House are hearing from theirs as well.

• (1240)

We do know that more than 200,000 postcards were sent to members in the other place, urging them to reject this change, yet those postcards were withheld and not delivered immediately. Parliament has a responsibility to ensure the voices of Canadians are received and considered. This level of public engagement demonstrates just how deeply Canadians care about protecting their freedoms. Faith leaders are speaking out. Experts are raising concerns.

These are not fringe voices. These are thoughtful, engaged Canadians who understand what is at stake.

The Liberal government has once again limited debate on this issue. It is shutting down the voices in this place, and it is ignoring the voices of Canadians. The Liberals are asking Canadians to trust them and to trust their intentions, but the Liberal Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture has already suggested that passages from the Bible are clearly hateful. He has said that prosecutors should have the discretion to lay charges in those cases. This is not a hypothetical concern. It is a stated view on the record from a Liberal minister.

Canadians are also looking at the government's record. This is not an isolated case. There is a broader pattern here, a pattern of shutting down debate, dismissing experts and stakeholders, pushing through legislation without proper review and introducing policies that chip away at fundamental freedoms. We saw it with the Canada summer jobs attestation. Canadians were told that if they did not affirm to certain beliefs, they could not access funding. We saw it when the finance committee suggested removing charitable status from churches. That recommendation was an attack on religious freedom and completely dismissed the incredible work faith communities across this country do every single day. We also saw freedom of religion threatened when the Liberals banned public prayer at Remembrance Day ceremonies. Over and over again, when it comes to faith and expression, the government has shown its willingness to draw lines around what Canadians can say and what they can believe.

This is why Canadians are uneasy. When a government asks for trust while limiting debate, while dismissing and ignoring legitimate concerns, and while removing long-standing protections, Canadians are justifiably concerned. This is exactly what we are seeing in Bill C-9. What is needed right now is leadership. The growing number of hate crimes must be confronted, but we must also recognize that the rise has happened under the Liberal government's watch. The Liberal government has failed to show leadership. It has failed to enforce laws that already exist. Many of the measures in this bill are already covered in current law. Actions such as obstructing access to places of worship, acts of intimidation, promoting hatred and inciting violence are all already illegal.

Conservatives offered a reasonable path forward with this bill. We offered to split the bill, to pass the parts everyone agrees on right away to protect Canadians and places of worship without delay, but the Liberals refused. They also rejected Conservative efforts to add clear language to the bill that would protect freedom of expression and freedom of religion. Canadians should be free to practise their religion and express their beliefs without fear, and that includes being free from overreach by the Liberal government. We must not criminalize peaceful expression. We must not open the door to the persecution of faith. It is time for the government to reconsider. This bill should be completely withdrawn. Rather than rushing this divisive legislation through the House, the minister needs to bring forward legislation that combats hate while fully protecting religious freedom and freedom of expression.

It is time to listen to Canadians, and it is time for these Liberals to stop chipping away at the freedoms that define us as Canadians.

• (1245)

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, there are many examples of legal experts who say this bill would not do what the member opposite claims, such as chipping away at religious freedoms or others. In fact, this bill would step up, and the government is acting to enhance the Criminal Code to ensure that communities are safe, to ensure that people can express, can worship the way they choose to in their communities. This is exactly what I have heard in my community.

I understand that we may disagree on this fundamentally, but what I want to know is, can the member cite an example of the religious defence being used in a case where an individual was accused or charged with a hate-motivated crime?

• (1250)

Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, there was lack of consultation with this bill. We know there was lack of consultation when it came to religious organizations, civil liberty groups, legal experts and faith communities across Canada, and I would say individual Canadians as well.

I will also note that stakeholders have publicly raised concerns about this, many of them, including the Christian Legal Fellowship, the Canadian Council of Imams, the National Council of Canadian Muslims, ARPA Canada and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. There have been many organizations, not just one particular faith group, that have brought forward the concerns of not being consulted or seeing issues with the bill.

I will also note, though, that there are sections within the Criminal Code that address crimes against places of worship and obstruction. That would be section 176, for example. Acts of intimidation are in section 423.1. I could go on and on.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Conservatives are reluctant to engage in any real debate on a number of points.

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My colleague said she would like to see this debated further. What solutions would she propose to ensure that we finally reach an agreement?

[*English*]

Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, we can kill this bill. This bill can be withdrawn. The government can do that and bring forward legislation that is uniting to Canadians, that immediately addresses the concerns that I mentioned in my speech.

I will say that the government cannot be trusted. We know that a minister of the Crown said there are parts of scripture that should be criminalized. That is the intent and goal of this. We cannot just take what Liberals say at face value. In my speech, I gave multiple examples of where the government is limiting Canadians' religious freedom and freedom of expression.

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this bill seeks to criminalize anyone who dares to quote from scripture, a religious text, and that is crossing the line, as far as I am concerned and as far as a lot of Canadians are concerned. It is the difference between the state and religion, the state and faith.

The more concerning thing is that when we bring these issues to committee, as we have in all other committees, the Liberal members have been tone-deaf. They have basically shot down every single amendment brought forth by members of the opposition. Can the member tell me how she feels about her participation when she voices an opinion of her constituents and recommends very reasonable amendments that get shot down time after time by this manufactured majority government on the other side?

Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, this is not something new under the Prime Minister. This was also a continued effort under former prime minister Justin Trudeau.

If anybody not wearing Liberal red brought forward thoughtful, meaningful amendments or even questions to debate, there was no entertaining it, which does a disservice. I think this is one of the reasons we have seen members from other parties crossing the floor. They are being enticed by being told they will be heard and listened to, as opposed to the governing party of the day acting like grown-ups, being respectful and thoughtful and having conversations. It is unfortunate that this does not happen in this place under the Liberals.

Government Orders

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hatred is real. Jewish Canadians have faced ongoing intimidation, including gunfire, firebombings and repeated threats against synagogues, schools and community institutions. Muslim Canadians have seen the tragic consequences when hatred turns deadly. Just a week ago, I joined Londoners in remembering the Afzaal family, four members of which were murdered five years ago because they were Muslim. Churches across the country have been vandalized, desecrated and, in far too many cases, burned to the ground. Members of other communities have also faced hatred, threats and intimidation because of their identity, beliefs or background.

No Canadian should be threatened because of who they are, what they believe or where they worship. No one should have to pass through a hostile crowd to enter a place of worship, or wonder whether that place will still be standing in the morning.

Conservatives believe that the people responsible for threats, violence, intimidation, criminal harassment and vandalism must be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and face consequences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes. Canada already has laws to deal with this conduct. The government should make sure that they are enforced and that the people who terrorize communities are held fully accountable. Instead, the government is using the real fears of vulnerable communities to justify a bill that would blur the line between crime and lawful speech that may be unpopular or controversial.

In a free country, the right to speak cannot depend on whether everyone agrees. Freedom of expression matters most when people strongly disagree. If the government can restrict lawful speech simply because someone finds it offensive, the line will keep moving. What is protected today may be questioned tomorrow, depending on who complains and who holds power. That is the dangerous path that Bill C-9 would put us on.

The narrow Senate amendment now before us would do nothing to address the broader danger. It would simply add the noose to the bill's list of prohibited symbols. The noose carries a horrifying history as an instrument of murder and terror, but adding one more symbol would not fix the bill. It would not restore the long-standing protection for good-faith religious expression or answer the concerns raised across the country. The Senate has changed the list but has not fixed the bill.

Bill C-9 is presented as though Canada has no laws against threats, intimidation or hateful conduct. That is simply not true. Canada already has laws against threats, criminal harassment, intimidation, mischief, violence, public incitement and hate-motivated crime, so why does the government act as though Canada has no laws to deal with these offences? Why expand criminal law instead of enforcing the laws we have, while removing protections for lawful religious expression.

What has been missing is political leadership, consistent enforcement and consequences that reflect the seriousness of these crimes. More laws do not make up for weak leadership, and unclear laws around speech do not make communities safer. The clearest example is the proposed removal of the religious defence from section 319 of the Criminal Code. For more than 50 years, Canadian law protected a person who, in good faith, expressed an opinion on a re-

ligious subject or an opinion based on belief in a religious text. The protection was narrow. It did not protect threats, violence, advocating genocide or encouraging a crime. It applied to one hate speech offence and protected good-faith religious discussion while allowing the law to deal with real hatred.

The government and the Bloc chose to remove that protection. They now tell Canadians not to worry. They tell faith leaders to trust prosecutors. They tell religious teachers to trust the courts, and they tell parents and clergy that lawful expression would probably remain lawful. However, if this protection were not needed, why was it kept in the Criminal Code for more than half a century? If the government still believes that good-faith religious expression should be protected, why remove the words that clearly protect it?

This is the slippery slope. It rarely begins with the government's openly saying it wants to criminalize ordinary religious teaching. It begins with promises that the law would be used only in extreme cases. The protection then disappears, and the line becomes less clear. A complaint is made against a faith leader, a teacher or a parent. An investigation and legal costs may follow. Even without a conviction, the process can become the punishment. Clergy and teachers would begin censoring themselves because the Liberal government has chosen to remove a clear protection and replace it with uncertainty.

That is how the slippery slope works. First the protection is removed. Then the line becomes unclear. Finally, people stop saying lawful things because they fear what might happen. However, self-censorship is not the only danger. Driving hateful ideas underground does not make them disappear. It can allow resentment and hatred to grow where they are harder to challenge, until they emerge in more dangerous forms. In a free society, bad ideas should be exposed and defeated in the open. Sunlight is often the best disinfectant. Criminal law should deal firmly with threats, violence and genuine incitement, but it should not push lawful discussion into the shadows, otherwise peaceful Canadians become afraid to speak, while real hatred is pushed out of sight instead of confronted.

Government Orders

● (1255)

Rights are rarely taken away all at once. They are weakened one step at a time, with every step described as small and reasonable. That is why the government must prove that these restrictions are needed, that existing law is not enough and that lawful speech will remain protected.

The government has not done that. Worse, it did not allow the full debate needed to test its case. The government used a programming motion to push the bill through committee. Debate was cut short. New amendments and subamendments could not be properly considered. Even the reading of amendments being voted on was restricted. Conservative safeguards for freedom of religion and freedom of expression were rejected. A government confident in its bill should welcome questions. Instead, the government shortened the process and pushed ahead without answering them.

Those concerns reach far beyond any one faith community. A joint statement opposing Bill C-9 brought together civil liberty organizations; Muslim, Jewish and Christian organizations; refugee advocates; legal groups; and other community organizations, from across Canada. They do not share one ideology, one faith or one political outlook. Their agreement cannot simply be dismissed.

Nor is opposition to Bill C-9 limited to Conservatives. At third reading, every participating NDP member and the leader of the Green Party joined Conservatives in voting against it. This is not simply a left versus right debate. The warning comes from across civil society and the political spectrum. The government also rejected the Conservative proposal to separate the broadly supported parts of the bill from those raising serious civil liberties concerns.

Now the bill has returned from the Senate with another symbol added to the list, while the main problems remain untouched. This is not a real fix. It is a distraction. The government would rather debate whether a noose is offensive than explain why it removed a 50-year-old protection for lawful religious expression. It would rather offer the appearance of action than provide the leadership and enforcement needed to make communities safer.

Freedom of religion means very little if it protects only beliefs that no one finds objectionable. Freedom of expression means very little if it protects only speech the government approves of. That does not mean every religious statement is wise or beyond criticism. People are free to disagree, challenge it and answer it with better arguments. Conservatives support protecting Canadians from threats, violence and intimidation, but we reject false choice between safety and freedom. Canada can enforce its laws against criminal conduct without placing peaceful religious expression under a cloud of fear and uncertainty.

The Senate amendment would not restore that balance. It would add a symbol, but it would not restore the religious defence. It would change a list but would not protect freedom of expression. It would do nothing to stop the slippery slope that begins when Parliament removes clear protections and tells Canadians simply to trust that government power would be used carefully.

Canadians deserve clear laws, strong enforcement, and consequences that match the seriousness of the crime. They also deserve firm protection for the freedoms of peaceful, law-abiding citizens.

Bill C-9 fails that test. The Senate amendment would not fix it. For those reasons, I urge the House to reject Bill C-9.

● (1300)

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's speech, although I fundamentally disagree with some of his arguments.

The previous Conservative member who spoke in the House could not cite an example of the religious defence's being used. I wonder if this member could.

What I do not understand is that the Conservatives talk a lot about wanting to protect communities and protect people's rights, but here they are with an opportunity to step up and support a bill that would amend the Criminal Code and would allow new tools to be given to law enforcement and to our criminal justice system to really protect people's rights to be able to worship and to express themselves in the way they see fit. Is that not fundamental enough? Does the member not believe that harsher penalties should come with hate-motivated crimes?

Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, the real concern, which was brought to my attention by constituents of London—Fanshawe, is the potential removal of freedom of expression and freedom of religion. As mentioned in my speech, constituents are concerned that they would have to always look behind their back when they do share religious texts, both in person and online. They are concerned that even protected religious text, with Bill C-9, may be quoted as hateful speech.

● (1305)

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a very divisive issue. There are some parts of Bill C-9 that various communities support. There is also a wide range of issues within Bill C-9 that communities do not support. The leadership of the Abrahamic faiths, for example, has come out very strongly against parts of Bill C-9, especially around religious freedom. I wonder if my colleague could comment on the government's unwillingness to listen to anything besides the narrow confines of its interests rather than to the larger faith community.

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Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, to add to what I mentioned in my speech, yes, there are multiple organizations concerned about Bill C-9, and those opposed to Bill C-9 are from civil liberties organizations; Muslim, Jewish, and Christian organizations; refugee advocates; legal groups; and parties across the political spectrum that are concerned and oppose the passing of Bill C-9.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague had previously asked the member if he could cite an example of the use of the religious exemption. The reason he cannot do that is that there are no examples, because it has never been used. Does the member genuinely believe that a pastor or a priest in a gurdwara would really be in difficult times by just quoting from the Guru Granth Sahib or a holy book? Does he really believe that?

Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, the concern with Bill C-9 is this: If it is passed, what would define hate speech? There are many people from many religions who are concerned that what they used to say in person or online, which is now protected with the current laws, if Bill C-9 is passed would be deemed hate speech. With regard to their questions, they are asking about a scenario that could potentially happen with the passage of Bill C-9.

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way stated that the religious exemption has never been used so they cannot cite a case. I am sure the member realizes that there was an exemption that did not have to be proven, and now Bill C-9 would remove that: genuine belief.

Is my friend hearing concerns from pastors about things such as that if they say that people should wait to be intimate, to have intercourse, until their marriage, that biblical principle could get them in trouble? Is my friend hearing questions of that nature?

Kurt Holman: Mr. Speaker, the key thing is that it is not just from clergy leaders that I am hearing concerns about Bill C-9. It is constituents, everyday Canadians in London—Fanshawe, and also outside London—Fanshawe, who are drawing concerns with regard to Bill C-9. If Bill C-9 is passed, they are concerned that what they preach or what they practise would be deemed hate speech.

[*Translation*]

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg South Centre.

I rise to speak to Bill C-9, the combatting hate act, at a time when Canadians are looking to us for clear, serious and determined action to better protect them from hate and intimidation.

I will begin by clearly describing the context we are currently in. Across Canada, Black, Jewish, Muslim, LGBTQ, indigenous and other communities are feeling extremely vulnerable. The rise of hate is far from theoretical. It is a palpable, painful and disturbing reality that we are seeing in schools, on the street and even in places of worship.

I cannot give this speech without mentioning the events that recently took place in Montreal. We live in a country of rights and freedoms. What we are experiencing right now illustrates the whole reason for this bill. It may be a combination of circumstances or an

unfortunate coincidence, but this happened here, in Canada. We have to discuss it and address the problem immediately.

It is not okay for people in positions of authority—regardless of their discretionary power—to incite any kind of targeted intent toward a particular community. In Canada, diversity is our strength. In Canada, our differences unite us. As an elected official, I cannot believe that a member of Parliament would say something with such serious implications. I am referring to the member for York—Durham. He said things that are hard to imagine, things that are beyond the pale. People may assert their parliamentary privilege, but they cannot say whatever they want just because they have that privilege.

Growing up, I was always taught that not every truth should be uttered. Yesterday, an elected official said something unacceptable. He outright dismissed the pain and stress that the mere thought of a noose can cause my community. He argued that we are importing an American problem into Canada. That is shocking.

In Canada, particularly in Nova Scotia, where the first Black communities were established, this symbol evokes a past marred by racism and intimidation toward Black people. In the North American context, the noose remains one of the most powerful and universally recognized symbols of racial hatred directed at Black communities.

Today, that member will have an opportunity to retract his remarks, now that he has had a chance to sleep on it. Hopefully he woke up this morning, drank his water and his coffee, and came to realize the implications of what he said. Hopefully he recognizes the importance of exercising his parliamentary privilege responsibly and of not simply saying whatever comes to mind while fulfilling the duties of this fine office. We must respect the House of Commons. It is the House of Canadians from all backgrounds, from east to west.

The noose has long been recognized as a symbol of virulent hatred directed at Black communities. It is deeply rooted in the history of anti-Black racism. The violence associated with the noose is not merely a historical phenomenon; it is a symbol that forms part of the hatred and violence to which Black Canadians are regularly subjected and which are rooted in a white supremacist ideology. This ideology is associated with the noose.

● (1310)

Now is the moment we have been waiting for. Canadians across the country have made it clear that they want to be able to live openly, safely and freely as themselves, regardless of their background, faith, ethnicity, gender, identity or community.

We all share the same goal: to protect Canadians from all forms of violence, particularly those that target the most fundamental aspects of being human. Canadians asked us to take action and keep them safe, and that is exactly what this bill does.

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Bill C-9 has been carefully examined by both chambers. It is now time for Canadians to get the protection they deserve from the government and the elected officials they have chosen.

For the first time, the Criminal Code will include a definition of hatred, which will describe the conduct that falls under the new stand-alone hate crime offence. This is an extremely important change that must not be overlooked.

This new offence and the new definition of hatred will address the particularly reprehensible nature of this crime, which undermines the very foundations of the Canadian values of equality and respect for our citizens.

By passing this bill swiftly, we will not just be strengthening the Criminal Code; we will also be sending a clear message to Canadians that their safety matters, their dignity matters, and their right to fully and freely belong in this country will be defended.

I urge all members of the House to support this bill and ensure that Canada continues to be a country where no one, and I mean no one, is made to feel unsafe simply because they are Canadian and have chosen to live in accordance with their identity while respecting their culture and heritage.

• (1315)

Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to tell my colleague how deeply moved I am by what he just said. I also want to go back to the comments that a Conservative member made yesterday about the noose, which I think were shameful.

Here in Canada, no one should feel unsafe because of who they are, what religion they practise, or where they gather. Recent incidents of Islamophobia have left too many people feeling vulnerable.

Could my colleague tell us how Bill C-9 will help our constituents feel safer?

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-9 seeks to guarantee Canadians the safety and security to which they are entitled. It also establishes a clear and precise definition of hatred.

Today, the member for York—Durham has the opportunity to rise in the House and withdraw his remarks.

[*English*]

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to note that in the Senate, the Senate committee studied Bill C-9 extensively, and I noted that there were witnesses from every background, whether they were from the LGBT community or from a faith community. I saw a Black pastor also. Every single one of these witnesses said that removing the good-faith exemption would be a big mistake. Every witness concurred, and this has nothing to do with race, racism or discrimination.

Is my friend across the way saying that all of these witnesses from these diverse backgrounds were false in this conclusion?

[*Translation*]

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with my colleague. What she says is not true. This bill does not restrict the

use of religious texts. People may use them as they see fit, provided that their freedom does not infringe upon the freedom of their neighbours or fellow human beings.

• (1320)

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois tabled an amendment that has been adopted. It seeks to abolish the religious exemption in the Criminal Code regarding incitement to hatred.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of this. How will this help to foster a more civilized debate and promote respect between different religions and people of all backgrounds?

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Mr. Speaker, I would like to return to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which gives Canadians the freedom to express themselves, to move about the country and to do as they please, provided that they do so in accordance with the law and, above all, with respect for the freedoms of each and every one of us.

Bill C-9 provides clear protection for Canadians. It defines hatred so that those found guilty can be properly punished in accordance with the law.

[*English*]

Leslyn Lewis: Mr. Speaker, the member across the way makes reference to the Charter of Rights, but it is not clear that for the charter to be invoked, a person has to be charged first? The removal of the good-faith clause means that people who are citing religious texts in good faith could be charged, and then they would have to go through financial expense and public shame before they could defend their rights and before the charter would be imposed.

Is that not the process, and is that not the way it would work? People would be guilty before proven innocent in this case.

[*Translation*]

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way is playing a very dangerous game, namely, sowing confusion in the minds of Canadians. What she said is not true. This bill is designed to protect Canadians. It provides a definition of hatred.

Let us stick to the bill, because it is important and protects Canadians from east to west.

[*English*]

Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I might take an opportunity to just pick up on something that happened a moment ago with a question from my colleague opposite. I think it is very important that she understands the following: It is a defence.

That means that a person has to be in court before they can use it. That means that a person has to have been investigated by police for having spewed hate in this country before they can have the ability to use the defence. To suggest that there would a change in anything regarding that law, that it would be amended by Bill C-9 in a way that would remove something that already exists prior to the legal proceedings in court, is simply false. I would gladly welcome a question from my colleague on this at the end of my remarks.

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As a Jewish Canadian, I often have the opportunity to attend events in my riding that the community is a part of, not only as their representative but also as an individual who was raised as a member of the Jewish faith. It has been made very clear to me, from members of the Jewish community, both in Winnipeg and across the country, over the course of the past number of years, that they want what Bill C-9 would accomplish to take place as a meaningful step forward for their protection in this country.

All of the major Jewish advocacy groups in the country have spoken in support of the bill, whether that be B'nai Brith, CIJA, the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center or a variety of grassroots members. I know because they have put pressure on me and my colleagues in the Jewish caucus on this side of the aisle, and on Jewish leadership across the country, to take action.

The question is, of course, why? Well, the reason for this is that we have seen a significant increase in hate in this country. It is not just targeted at the Jewish community, but we know that those in the Jewish community, representing less than 1% of the Canadian population, are the victims of more than three-quarters of reported religiously motivated hate crimes in this country.

I am going to, in a moment, speak to the amendment that the Senate put forward vis-à-vis a particular hate symbol, but there are a couple of arguments I have heard, put forward by my colleagues in the opposition, that I just do not quite understand. I welcome the opportunity for them to perhaps add some clarity in the questions that they will be permitted to ask when I am done my remarks.

One argument came from one of our colleagues during debate about an hour ago. My question was, if what the Conservatives are saying is true, that this is not needed because it is simply a matter of a lack of enforcement on the part of police across the country, then why do they hold the government accountable for police not enforcing the law? If they argue that the laws are already there, that the laws are already strong enough, and therefore there is no reason for Bill C-9, an argument I have heard many make throughout this debate, then what is it that they want the government to do?

The member's answer was similar to what I have heard from others. They said it is very important for the government to show leadership. It is very important, they say, for the government to have legislation that makes it easier for the police to be able to enforce the law. Is that not exactly what Bill C-9 does?

If we look at some of the other arguments that have been made, again from colleagues across the way, they will say things like Bill C-9 is not going to stop a shooting at a synagogue. It might be true that, unfortunately, the targeting of a synagogue will take place regardless of how good our laws are, but that argument is like saying that we have a law preventing murder, but people still get killed, so what is the point of having a law that prohibits murder? It does not make any sense to me.

What I continue to hear from my colleagues across the way is rooted not in fact, but in fear. I cannot help but note how much fundraising my colleagues have done off of this piece of legislation in the last year. They are telling Jews, for example, that they will not be able to say they are Zionists. That is ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous.

• (1325)

It is important for us to have healthy debates in this chamber about how our public policy and laws will impact Canadians. What is not acceptable is to use those conversations to create divides and wedges in our country for political purposes.

If we look at the Senate amendment that was put forward, the subject of our debate today, it is very important to note a couple of things. The first is that members opposite, including the member for York—Durham, yesterday suggested something that I am still struggling to understand, which is that the noose in Canada is not a hate symbol.

Here is something I find interesting. Two weeks ago, when a noose was put around the neck of an effigy of a Jewish leader being burned on a street in Montreal, members across the way were, rightly so, up in arms, and they should have been, but now the member for York—Durham is saying that the very symbol placed around the neck of that Jewish leader, which he and his colleagues condemned, is not, in fact, a symbol of hate worthy of being included in this legislation. Again, I do not understand.

We have heard the noose described by colleagues across the way as an American problem, as though it is a relic from somebody else's history. They have said that it is wrong for the Senate to have asked for that amendment. The request to have the noose included in Bill C-9 was brought forward by many community organizations. The Black Opportunity Fund and, from my home province, the Black-Manitobans Chamber of Commerce testified at the human rights committee at the Senate. They were supported by Black Health Alliance, a co-author of Canada's Black justice strategy, researchers at McGill University, the Center for Research-Action on Race Relations and Black-led justice organizations in Nova Scotia and from across the country.

When that many credible Canadian voices are saying the same thing, it is our responsibility to listen. When we listen, we have to hear the evidence, so here it is. Between 2020 and 2021, nooses were left at construction sites across Toronto, at a hospital, at transit stations on the Crosstown line, at a tower on Bay Street and at a housing development in Regent Park. They were so frequent and so frightening that Black workers in the construction trades formed their own association in response. What does the member for York—Durham say, which was not challenged by a single member in his own party, at least that I have heard? He says this is not a Canadian problem.

In Nova Scotia, two teenagers were charged after waving a noose at a Black family. In Alberta, a surgeon taped a noose to an operating room door to terrorize a Black colleague, and the conduct was found to be a serious threat. In Ontario, a 13-year-old girl found a drawing of a noose in her backpack on the first day of school.

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This is not some other country's history. This is today in Canada, in our own time. Those are Canadian workers, Canadian families and Canadian children, and it reaches this very institution, where these stories have been shared. In testimony before the Senate human rights committee, Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard described being harassed in her own neighbourhood, being shouted at to go back to Africa by someone with a noose hanging from the back of their truck, yet the member for York—Durham says this is not a Canadian problem.

I raise this because, when a member of Canada's Parliament has had a noose brandished at her on a Canadian street, we can no longer pretend this is a foreign problem. It happens here. It is happening here, and we need to take action. I would say, with respect, to any member who calls the noose an odd inclusion, that it is critical they listen to the testimony and experiences of our colleagues in Parliament, as well as those of Canadians from across the country, who are experiencing this form of hate. I do not understand why my colleagues opposite would not support the inclusion of this clearly problematic symbol of hate as an important amendment to the bill.

It is a bill that I am proud to stand here, as a member of Parliament, as a Jewish member of Parliament and as a Canadian, in support of.

• (1330)

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand what my colleague is saying; it is understandable. Various faith groups have expressed concerns about Bill C-9, such as the leadership for the Catholic bishops in Canada and others from the Abrahamic faiths.

Can the member explain why those views and concerns on Bill C-9 should be discounted?

Ben Carr: Mr. Speaker, I do not, in any way, believe that their views should be discounted. I simply do not believe that their views ought to be the determining factor for how we choose to protect Canadians through public policy and legal reform.

I would suggest that part of the reason people are scared is that we have members of the opposition sending out emails on a weekly basis to Jewish leaders that say they are going to be put in jail for publicly saying that they are a Zionist. It is not true.

It is not about diminishing the importance of hearing feedback from leaders in this country. It is about being honest and transparent with them about what this law would actually do.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this debate is difficult because the Liberals have put forward that there is no justification for being against Bill C-9. I have a lot of difficulty with that, particularly from a civil liberties point of view, especially in its describing of the idea of there being certain places and certain symbols.

However, we are grappling with the same problem we have been grappling with for a long time. I think the cosmic jury may still be out as to whether *Homo sapiens* were a good idea. We seem to be willing to take up arms against each other, hate each other and do foul things to each other. It just brings to mind what Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. said: "Morality cannot be legislated, but behav-

ior can be regulated. Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless."

I am torn about the bill in many ways, but I cannot vote for it, and I wish that there were more ways through which we could find common cause against hatred.

Ben Carr: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I heard a question, but I do appreciate the reflections shared by the member opposite, for whom I have a great deal of respect.

Of course, we want to live in a society and in a world free from hate. Unfortunately, that is not the reality of the world we find ourselves in today. It is incumbent upon elected officials in this country to take actions, on behalf of those they represent, to strengthen the protections that they deserve.

Bill C-9 is a reasonable and important step in making amendments to the Criminal Code that would keep people in this country safer than they would have been prior to the passage of the bill.

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the repeal of the religious exemption in the Criminal Code for cases of incitement of hatred.

It definitely does not mean that reading religious texts of any religion whatsoever is forbidden, but it does prohibit deliberately using religious texts to incite hatred against a group or another religion.

Ben Carr: Mr. Speaker, I missed the first part of my colleague's question, but I think it is an extremely important conversation. We have a problem with hate in Canadian society, and in my opinion, Bill C-9 is an extremely important step to ensuring that we have greater protection for Canadians across the country.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, as legislators, we need to be mindful of the impact that our words can have in the public arena and we must also ensure that what we say does not contribute to disinformation and does not harm certain groups that we wish to protect.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the importance of being thorough and factual when debating a bill as important as Bill C-9.

Ben Carr: Mr. Speaker, as I said a few moments ago, this is a very important moment for us here in Canada. We must take action that will truly protect children, families and communities across Canada because hate is an ongoing problem. Many members of various communities across Canada continue to face violence and intimidation.

This bill is necessary to ensure better protection. I fully support passing this bill.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Amanpreet Gill (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Edmonton Gateway, a former wrestler whom I respect a lot.

I rise today to speak in strong opposition to Bill C-9, legislation that threatens some of the most fundamental freedoms protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms: freedom of religion and freedom of expression. Let me begin by stating something clearly. Conservatives condemn hatred, racism, religious unfairness and violence in all forms. Every Canadian, regardless of faith, ethnicity, background or identity, deserves to live safely, worship freely and participate fully in our society without fear.

The question before us is not whether hate should be condemned but whether the government should weaken fundamental freedoms in the process. Unfortunately, that is exactly what Bill C-9 would do. Under Canada's current hate speech laws, there is an important safeguard in the Criminal Code that provides a defence against prosecution for the promotion of hatred when a person expresses, in good faith, an argument or opinion on a religious subject or belief based on a religious text.

Many Canadians may not realize that this defence is very limited. It does not apply to threats, advocacy of genocide or any criminal conduct under the Criminal Code. In other words, the current law already strikes a careful balance; Canadians remain free to discuss, teach and express their religious beliefs in good faith, while those who engage in genuine criminal behaviour remain subject to prosecution.

The Supreme Court of Canada recognized the importance of this balance. The court understood that freedom of religion and freedom of expression are essential pillars of a free, democratic society. It recognized that without safeguards, hate speech laws could become vulnerable to constitutional challenge because they risk criminalizing legitimate religious expression. That is why the religious freedom defence exists. It was not by accident. It was included because lawmakers understood that protecting freedom of religion is just as important as fighting hate. Bill C-9 seeks to remove this safeguard.

Bill C-9 proposes new offences related to the promotion of hatred and the public display of certain symbols. The meaning of a symbol can vary depending on the circumstance in which it is displayed. Schools, museums, historians, journalists, artists and researchers often study symbols in ways that are uncomfortable but very important. Canadians should never have to wonder whether legitimate expression could expose them to investigation, prosecution or legal uncertainty.

One of the most troubling aspects of Bill C-9 is its proposed expansion of Criminal Code provisions related to hate speech and hate propaganda. The government claims that the bill would target only extreme forms of hatred, yet history teaches us that when governments are given broader power to regulate speech, those powers rarely remain limited to the most obvious offenders.

Freedom of expression is not a privilege granted by the government but a fundamental freedom protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The result of the bill would be that people of faith could face criminal prosecutions for the simple act of quoting, dis-

cussing or teaching from their own sacred texts. Canadians should be concerned by this possibility. Whether someone is quoting from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Bible, the Torah, the Quran, the Bhagavad-Gita or another holy text, they should not have to fear that expressing their religious belief could expose them to criminal liability.

• (1340)

As a Sikh, I find this issue especially troubling. Sikhs came here seeking opportunity, freedom and the ability to practise their faith openly. Like many faith communities, we rely on our holy teachings as a guide for moral and spiritual life. The Sri Guru Granth Sahib is central to Sikh faith and identity. The freedom to discuss its teachings is fundamental. The same is true for Christians and the Bible, Hindus and the Bhagavad-Gita, Muslims and the Quran, and members of many other faith communities.

This issue is not about one religion. It is about protecting the rights of all religions. Once government begins restricting religious expression, every faith community has reason to be concerned. What makes this legislation even more troubling is the attitude some Liberals have shown toward religious texts. Canadians have every right to ask what happens when legal protections for religious expression are removed while Liberal voices describe portions of sacred texts as hateful.

The government argues that this legislation is necessary to address hate. However, removing the safeguard would not make Canadians safer. It would not stop violent criminals or prevent acts of hatred. It would not protect vulnerable communities from genuine threats. Those who advocate violence are already subject to criminal penalties. Nothing in the current law prevents authorities from prosecuting individuals who engage in criminal conduct.

Instead, Bill C-9 would risk threatening lawful expression rather than unlawful actions. That is a dangerous path for any democracy. Freedom of expression is not meant to protect only popular opinions. It is not meant to protect only views that government approves of. It exists to protect the ability of Canadians to express opinions, beliefs and convictions without fear of state punishment.

The same principle applies to freedom of religion. Canadians should be free to worship according to their beliefs. They should be free to teach their faith, discuss their beliefs and quote their sacred texts without wondering whether it could result in criminal investigation. These rights belong to all Canadians, regardless of political affiliation or religious background.

Government Orders

Conservatives believe that Canada can fight hate while still protecting fundamental freedoms. These goals are not mutually exclusive. In fact, our legal system has long recognized the importance of balancing both. Bill C-9 abandons that balance. It would remove a safeguard that the Supreme Court recognized as important. It would create uncertainty for faith communities across the country, and it would risk people's religious expression without providing any meaningful improvement to public safety.

That is why Conservatives will stand up for people of faith, for freedom of expression, for freedom of religion and for the Charter of Rights that Canadians cherish. Conservatives will fight against this attack on our freedoms. We will defend the constitutional right that the government is attempting to take away. We will continue to stand with Canadians who believe that faith, freedom and democracy must always be protected.

• (1345)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed unfortunate. We see the winding down of debate on Bill C-9, an important piece of legislation that deals with hate. It is one of many pieces of legislation that this Prime Minister and this government have introduced since the last federal election, just over a year ago.

Canadians will know, and realize, that the Government of Canada is serious about dealing with crime. On the other hand, we have the Conservatives, who like to talk about it, raise money on it and spread misinformation on it, but when it comes right down to supporting good policy, they are found wanting. They consistently vote against good crime-fighting legislation. Today we are talking hate. The question is why?

Amanpreet Gill: Mr. Speaker, the member's accusations of misinformation are disappointing and do little to address any concerns being raised by Canadians. In the past decade of Liberal rule, the country has only become more divided. Ethnic violence between immigrants and the division we have seen in Alberta, the division we have seen between new Canadians, are just because of the Liberals' policies. Even Bill C-9 would create more division than it would bring Canadians together.

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it very unfortunate that the member for Winnipeg North would accuse this member of the things that he has put on the record today. I think that is a pretty disturbing accusation to put on the record. I think the member for Calgary Skyview is accurately representing the concerns that he has heard from his own constituents as well as his own ethnic community.

I wonder if the member could put on the record a bit more of the things that he has heard from leaders of his faith, which the member for Winnipeg North should probably take heed of before we take a final vote on the bill.

Amanpreet Gill: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely believe in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In fact, that is why we are raising these concerns and presenting amendments. We have the solution. The Liberals can adopt it, and the country would be more united.

[*Translation*]

Natilien Joseph (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening in the House, a Conservative member said something extremely serious. He said that the noose was not a hate symbol. I want to take this opportunity to ask all members of the Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Green Party to join us in condemning this member's remarks in the strongest possible terms.

The question I want to ask my colleague is this: Does he condemn this member's remarks?

• (1350)

[*English*]

Amanpreet Gill: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives condemn those kind of actions. The bill would not stop at addressing incidents like this. The bill is an overreacting attack on the freedom of religious rights and an attack on all Canadians. I would like to request that the members from across support us and vote no on the bill, so Canadians can unite.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does my colleague agree that religious texts should never be deliberately used to incite hatred against a particular group?

If so, why not abolish the existing religious exemption in the Criminal Code for this type of offence?

[*English*]

Amanpreet Gill: Mr. Speaker, I respect the member from the Bloc. Conservatives condemn those kinds of actions and those kinds of attacks. If the Bloc asks why safeguards do not give us insurance, the exemption clause provides the safeguard Canadians deserve instead of trying to add more small fixes in fine print. I would ask members of the Bloc to support us.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Calgary Skyview for splitting his time with me. I know how difficult it is to take any speaking time away from a former gurdwara president.

Along with a rise in violent crime in this country, we also see a rise in hate crimes right across Canada. Canadians are looking to the government for leadership and action. Laws that already exist need to be enforced, and new legislation needs to be brought in to help keep communities safe. Unfortunately, Liberal Bill C-9 would take away protections and create uncertainty and fear among many communities and people of faith.

Government Orders

At the heart of the debate today on Bill C-9 is the proposed removal of a long-standing religious freedom protection that has been part of Canada's Criminal Code for more than 50 years. When Parliament first enacted hate propaganda laws in the 1970s, it deliberately included safeguards for truth, public interest, lack of intent and good-faith religious expression based on sincerely held religious beliefs and religious texts. These protections were designed to ensure that Canada could combat genuine hate crimes while preserving the fundamental freedoms that are essential in a free, democratic country. Let me be clear: This defence has never protected calls for violence, threats, genocide or any other criminal act. Those actions were already illegal and remain illegal.

The issue before us today is not whether anyone should be free to spread hatred. The issue is whether Canadians acting in good faith should lose a long-standing protection for lawful religious expression. Bill C-9 would remove that protection, and the Senate amendment would do nothing to restore it.

The Liberal government has proposed changes to the Criminal Code through Bill C-9 that could have serious consequences for freedom of expression and for religious liberty in our country. The bill would repeal long-standing provisions that protect individuals speaking on a religious subject or quoting their sacred texts. These protections have existed for over five decades to ensure that good-faith expression or belief is not misinterpreted as criminal conduct. With these changes, individuals acting in good faith, meaning reasonably and without malicious intent, could face the risk that preaching, sharing beliefs or expressing political views may be treated as hate speech under an expanded interpretation of the bill.

It is no surprise that many people of faith, and different religious organizations, have been sounding the alarms, warning that the legislation would create uncertainty for faith communities, where sincere religious expression could potentially be subject to criminal investigation or prosecution. In fact, the same religious minority groups that are often victims of hate crimes have raised concern about parts of Bill C-9 that could backfire and be used against them, potentially undermining the civil liberties that have historically protected them from persecution.

The legal counsel for the Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association acknowledged that Islamophobia is a serious issue affecting her community. She explained that Muslims, along with other racialized and marginalized groups, often face hatred, not only because of their religion but also because of race, ethnicity, language and even clothing. Despite these concerns, she urged the committee and the Senate to reject Bill C-9 in its current form because of its impact on civil liberties. She warned that the bill would not improve public safety. Instead, she said, it could lead to overcriminalization of marginalized communities, limit political expression and reduce constitutional freedoms. She also cautioned that it could discourage people from participating in democratic debate and civic engagement, which would ultimately not make anyone safer.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has also raised significant concerns regarding the proposed removal of religious exemption in Bill C-9. In an open letter addressed to the Prime Minister, the bishops stated that the proposed amendment could have unintended consequences for religious freedom in Canada and

that the current defence provides a crucial and vital safeguard for Canadians who express sincerely held religious beliefs in good faith. They noted that the provision has long protected individuals from criminal prosecution for discussing or teaching beliefs grounded in religious traditions and sacred texts.

● (1355)

They also warned that removing the exemption could create uncertainty for faith communities, clergy, educators and religious organizations. According to the bishops, some may fear that traditional religious teachings on moral or doctrinal matters could be misinterpreted as hate speech, potentially exposing individuals to criminal proceedings. They express their serious concern that people would be put in a position where they must refrain from teaching their sincerely held religious beliefs. In other words, the fear of the state's cracking down on ideas with which it disagrees would lead to priests and faith leaders being silenced.

Balpreet Singh, legal counsel for the World Sikh Organization of Canada, testified that his organization's recent study found that 65% of respondents across Canada have expressed anti-Sikh hate. At the same time, he raised concerns that parts of Bill C-9 could undermine lawful political expression, peaceful protests and religious freedom. He also warned that Bill C-9 has already become the target of a disinformation campaign, particularly in foreign media and online, which has falsely claimed that the bill is aimed at the Sikh communities in Canada.

According to Mr. Singh, these claims are misleading and are intended to create fear and suspicion within the Sikh community. Mr. Singh emphasized that this combination of unclear legislation and misinformation has created unnecessary fear within the community even before the bill has been fully enacted.

Just recently, the Senate proposed an amendment to Bill C-9 that would do nothing to address the real issues with the piece of legislation. While the amendment would add the noose to the list of prohibited hate symbols, it would do nothing to restore the protections for freedom of religion and freedom of expression that Bill C-9 would remove. The Senate amendment would not restore the religious defence. It would not address concerns about freedom of expression. It would not address concerns about freedom of religion, nor would it respond to the warnings raised by many of the communities the legislation is supposed to protect. At its core, the debate remains about fundamental freedoms.

On this side of the House, we support stronger protections for churches, synagogues, gurdwaras, mosques, temples and cultural centres, and for the Canadians who gather inside them. No one should face—

The Speaker: The hon. member may resume after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

MEMBER FOR ROSEMONT—LA PETITE-PATRIE

Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, 15 years ago, a man named Jack Layton won Quebec's heart and led the NDP into official opposition for the first time. I had the privilege of being part of that wave.

The people of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie continued to put their trust in me in four subsequent elections. I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart. Representing them has been an honour, a privilege and a true pleasure, not only in the toughest of struggles, but also in the collective and personal victories we secured.

Of course, I want to thank my team. I cannot name everyone, but these supporters and dedicated individuals know who they are. Still, I would like to acknowledge my current team. I wish to thank Julien, François, Jean-Christophe, Iseult and Carolina, who has been by my side from the very beginning of this adventure. I also thank my partner, Lisa, who has been incredibly patient and supportive.

In this troubled and troubling world, we need progressive and humanist voices in this Parliament, in all parliaments and in all places where decisions are made. I hope that there will be many such voices in the future.

Let us move forward. It is not too late to build a better world.

* * *

[*English*]

RAJPAUL SINGH DHILLON

Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the life and legacy of Rajpaul Singh Dhillon, known as Paul Dhillon, an award-winning journalist, screenwriter, producer and film director whose contributions enriched Canada's cultural landscape and amplified the voices of diverse communities. Through his work, he shared stories that fostered understanding, celebrated heritage and connected people across generations. His dedication to journalism, storytelling and the arts reflected a commitment to truth, creativity and community.

I extend my sincere condolences to his spouse, Harsimrat, and his two children, Muskaan and Ishaan, as well as to all those whose lives he touched.

May his memory and enduring legacy continue to inspire future generations.

Statements by Members

COMMUNITY WORK IN ELMWOOD—TRANSCONA

Colin Reynolds (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great privilege that I rise in the House to honour an exceptional member of the Elmwood—Transcona community, Leilani Esteban-Villarba. Leilani is the hard-working executive director of the Chalmers Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation. Through their efforts, she and her team lead practical and ground-level neighbourhood work to help support and uplift our community. Leilani and the CNRC have created vital non-profit programs and started key neighbourhood initiatives.

Leilani's work is not abstract. She and her team are a direct solution to growing problems facing Canadian society. Her work is squarely focused on addressing the needs of our community, whether they are affordable groceries, access to housing, safer streets, or cleaner neighbourhoods. Because of the CNRC, Elmwood is stronger, safer and a better place to live.

I thank Leilani for everything she and the CNRC do for our community.

* * *

PETERBOROUGH

Emma Harrison (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we move closer to the House's rising for the summer, I want to take this opportunity to thank the people of the riding of Peterborough for their continued trust and engagement.

Canada's democracy is one of our nation's greatest strengths. It is the foundation of our freedoms, our rights and our ability to shape a better future together. At a time when democracies around the world face growing challenges, we must remain united in protecting and strengthening the country that generations of Canadians have protected and built. In the House, we bear both the responsibility and the privilege entrusted to us by the people we represent, to preserve this legacy and ensure its strength and vitality for generations to come.

I am forever grateful for the honour to serve.

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ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH NO. 1

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, Calgary's Royal Canadian Legion Branch No. 1 hosted and was addressed by the leader of the Conservative Party on the importance of building a strong Alberta within a united Canada. It was exactly the right place for that message. Built in 1922 as Memorial Hall, it was Calgary's primary tribute to those Canadians who served and sacrificed in the First World War. For more than a century, Branch No. 1 has been a gathering hall, as well as a place of remembrance, welcoming generations of veterans, families and Calgarians through its doors.

Statements by Members

Today that historical building needs our help. After decades of service, it is in urgent need of repairs, starting with its roof. This Canada Day, Calgarians are coming together to restore it, because this building is more than a hall. It is a promise kept to those who answered the call to defend the ideals of Canada, and it belongs to all Calgary. I encourage everyone to support this effort, honour our veterans and ensure that this landmark stands for generations to come.

* * *

• (1405)

[Translation]

LOWER LAURENTIANS

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, now that summer is here, I would like to invite everyone to come discover the wonders of the Lower Laurentians. Our region offers a unique one-day agri-tourism experience that gives visitors an opportunity to meet local producers, sample local flavours and support our local businesses.

The Vieux-Saint-Eustache farmers' market is a must-visit destination for fresh produce, a friendly atmosphere and our artisans' expertise. It is open every Saturday morning through the end of September. I also encourage everyone to visit Vieux-Saint-Eustache. Known for its rich history, heritage and culture, it is the perfect place for a stroll with family or friends.

This summer, I urge everyone, including all my colleagues, to come enjoy our delightful region, support our local businesses and experience the beauty of the Lower Laurentians.

I wish everyone a wonderful summer.

* * *

[English]

YOUNG VOICES TORONTO

Karim Bardeesy (Taiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate and thank Young Voices Toronto on its 40th anniversary concert at Runnymede United Church.

Founder Ann Cooper Gay grew up in Palacios, Texas, came to Canada during the height of the Vietnam War, started teaching music here and founded what was then called the High Park Choirs in 1986, yet another example of the contribution of immigrants to our country.

Since then, this remarkable organization, now led by artistic director and conductor Carole Anderson, has helped young people find confidence, friendship and a sense of belonging in Taiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park and beyond through the timeless power of song.

The anniversary concert last month was a celebration of Canada, featuring Canadian composers and featuring a stirring opening rendition of *O Canada*, one that sets a new bar for us as we plan to sing the same anthem here tomorrow.

To all the voices at Young Voices Toronto, past and present, and their families, I thank them. In this era of doomscrolling, when we lift our voices together we are stronger. We are better.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS CANADA SUMMER GAMES

Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from August 11 to August 15, the city of Medicine Hat is thrilled to host the 2026 Special Olympics Canada summer games, welcoming 1,700 participants from across the country.

These games will showcase the incredible talents and inspiring stories of athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities through competition, camaraderie, personal bests and unforgettable memories. Athletes will compete in 10 sports, each with their respective disciplines, celebrating inclusive sport excellence and highlighting achievement across this country.

I thank the approximately 1,500 volunteers, strong community partnerships and everyone who has worked tirelessly to ensure these games are a success. I encourage the residents of Medicine Hat and area and all Canadians to come and experience this extraordinary event and cheer on these amazing athletes.

Unforgettable moments of competition and connection will be created as Canada comes together in celebration of these Special Olympics Games. I wish good luck to all participants.

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KEVIN FLYNN

Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the passing of long-time city councillor, regional district director and former chair Kevin Flynn.

Kevin's leadership earned him the deep respect of the community he served so passionately, yet for all his dedication to public service, Kevin's greatest joy was his family. He leaves behind his beloved wife Cathy, his proud sons Chris and Curtis, daughters-in-law Katherine and Stephanie, and his three cherished grandsons, who affectionately called him "Grump-Pa." The name may reflect Kevin's armchair coaching and reffing style.

Following Kevin's social media during games, when there was a bad coaching decision or questionable referee or empire call, we could count on Kevin to say clearly what the call should have been. Kevin called it like he saw it. That is the way he went through life, and in his role as city councillor and regional district director and chair. His integrity, laughter and dedication will be clearly missed but not forgotten.

Rest in peace, Kevin.

• (1410)

[Translation]

P'TIT TRAIN DU NORD

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Laurentians were developed thanks to the P'tit Train du Nord, the cherished dream of Father Labelle. It was a railway line that made it possible to open up the territory and build our communities.

For the past 30 years, this iconic route has sustained another mode of transportation. Today, cyclists, trekkers, runners and cross-country skiers can enjoy this long trail winding like a ribbon through our mountains, along our lakes and rivers and between our villages.

Stretching over more than 230 kilometres, the P'tit Train du Nord linear park has become a key piece of tourism infrastructure for the Laurentians. It raises our region's profile, supports local businesses and encourages active transportation and a healthy lifestyle.

The P'tit Train du Nord has been part of our regional identity since the late 19th century. It is a tribute to our ability to transform our heritage into a collective resource and look ahead to a bright future.

This summer, I encourage everyone to come visit the Laurentians.

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[English]

FOSTER HEWITT MEMORIAL AWARD

Kristina Tesser Derksen (Milton East—Halton Hills South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour today to recognize the recipient of the 2026 Foster Hewitt Memorial Award, Georgetown's own Chris Cuthbert.

Chris has been a dedicated member of the sports broadcasting community since his time at Queen's University, now serving over 45 years as a sports broadcaster. People might recognize him as the lead play-by-play commentator during CBC and Sportsnet's *Hockey Night in Canada*, captivating those of us in the stands and watching at home, or from his iconic call of Sidney Crosby's golden goal at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver.

The Foster Hewitt Memorial Award is given to those who have made outstanding contributions to the broadcast profession in the game of hockey, and Chris is the epitome. His persona reflects resilience, passion and positivity, marked by an overall strong engagement in the sport. He has been a wonderful link for hockey fans for many years, and his broadcasting is one of my favourite parts of game day.

I congratulate Chris.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, London has long been the canary in the coal mine for the hardships Canadians are feeling. When affordability worsens, unemployment

Statements by Members

rises and the Liberal recession deepens, Londoners are among the first to feel it, and our community is hit the hardest. The Canadian promise was simple: work hard, do one's part and build a stable life.

This weekend, while I was going for a walk, a fellow Londoner, Diana, pulled me aside. She is 55, works in a factory and cares for a mother who is battling cancer. However, the cost of living has become so crushing that Diana now relies on her sick mother to help her buy basics like bread and milk. She asked me, "Why is this happening when I've done everything right?" She is grieving a Canadian promise that no longer feels real.

It is not just happening in London. About 38% of Canadians face food insecurity, and 40% are losing sleep over stretching their paycheques. Diana's story is personal, but not unique. London has been the warning. Will the Liberal government finally listen?

* * *

ATHLETE CONGRATULATIONS

Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to pay tribute to a remarkable young Prince Edward Island athlete, Abby Hustler. Over the last number of years, Abby has excelled as a hockey player. She played with the PWHL Minnesota Frost, now drafted by the expansion Hamilton team. Abby is the first Islander drafted to the Professional Women's Hockey League.

In my Egmont riding, the enthusiasm is enormous. In fact, there is a debate among several communities that all claim Abby as their own: St. Louis, Ebbsfleet and Miminegash. Everybody wants to say "we knew her when", and I know Abby's parents, Paul and April, are absolutely thrilled with Abby's accomplishments and career.

Beyond those great local rivalries, one fact remains: Abby is a wonderful example of everything a young person from a small community can accomplish. She is a great role model for thousands of Islanders. I am looking forward to attending Abby Day on July 4 in Miminegash, her hometown.

* * *

• (1415)

THE ECONOMY

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's luxurious travel around the world has racked up a nearly \$1-million catering bill. That is enough to feed a family for 55 years. While the Prime Minister eats five-star meals, Canadians are struggling. A record 2.2 million Canadians use a food bank every single day, and today, 24,000 children will walk through the doors of a food bank hoping to find something to eat.

Canadian families are spending more than 120% of their income on food and rent. Canadians are right to ask why they are paying sky-high taxes to cover the Prime Minister's luxurious catering budget, while they cannot afford their own groceries. The Prime Minister and his policies are completely out of touch with the reality in our communities.

Oral Questions

The Conservatives want to lower food prices by taking the tax off gas and diesel for the rest of the year, to cut red tape and carbon taxes driving up the cost of everything, to end wasteful spending and to replace Liberal excess with results for Canadians.

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COQUITLAM—PORT COQUITLAM

Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Christine and I sent Katherine and Sarah off on school trips, we waved goodbye and could not wait to hear about their adventures when they returned home. That was the expectation for the parents of Minnehada Middle School students in Port Coquitlam yesterday. Ten students and two adults on an end-of-year excursion to Cultus Lake Waterpark sustained serious electrical injuries. They were rushed to hospital by ground and air ambulance. They are now in stable condition.

To the kids, I say get better soon. They have an entire community pulling for them. To the parents, I say I cannot imagine the fear and anxiety in those moments. No parent expects a call like the one they received yesterday. I want to assure the parents, the children and all those impacted that the whole Tri-Cities community stands with them.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are less safe today than they were a decade ago. Violent crime has risen by 55% since 2015. Liberal weak-on-crime policies have left Canadians feeling less secure. Police need effective tools to stop dangerous criminals. With proper judicial authorization, lawful access is key to investigating serious crimes. That is why Conservatives are prepared to support part 1 of Bill C-22. Part 2, though, raises serious questions. I have heard from many of my neighbours who fear elements of this legislation are overreaching. They likely infringe on the privacy rights of law-abiding Canadians. The Canadian Constitution Foundation has warned that part 2 risks creating a “surveillance state”.

Canadians should not have to choose between public safety and protecting their fundamental freedoms. The Liberals promised to listen and make changes. Instead, they are ramming a contentious bill through Parliament. The Liberals are ignoring legitimate concerns raised by experts and Canadians. They should be embarrassed. The government should swiftly pass part 1, give police the tools they need and then go back to the drawing board with part 2.

* * *

[Translation]

MARLENE JENNINGS SERVICE AWARD

Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Marlene Jennings Service Award will be launched later today in Montreal.

[English]

The Hon. Marlene Jennings, the former member of Parliament for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, is an incredible role model for anyone who aspires to serve their country, their community or their

peers. I should know. She was my mentor when I was first elected and remains my sis friend to this day.

This award establishes a new recognition model that directly reflects Marlene Jennings' leadership style: collaborative, community focused, rule-breaking when necessary and always centred on empowering others. By shining a light on these change-makers and providing unrestricted funding, the proponents are not just celebrating those who serve so generously; they are accelerating their work and signalling to others that this different way of leading matters.

[Translation]

I do not have time to go into detail about all of the criteria for this award, which honours unsung Quebeckers, but I thought it would be a good idea for Canada to draw inspiration from this initiative to acknowledge everything that our fellow citizens do to make our communities so resilient.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said affordability is the best it has been in decades, but normal, hard-working, everyday Canadians know that is simply not true. Meat Loaf famously once sang *Two Out of Three Ain't Bad*, but, surely, three out of four is not good. That is certainly true when it comes to economic decline, but that is exactly what the Prime Minister has given us. He has given us three out of four quarters of negative economic growth, making us the only G20 nation in a recession.

What is the Liberals' response? They are downplaying it as nothing more than just a technicality.

Will the Prime Minister reverse his costly policies that caused this crisis so that Canadians can afford to live again?

● (1420)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can see on the Conservatives' faces today that they are not very happy, but let me bring them good news, because the country wants good news.

In fact, in 2025, Canada received the highest level of foreign direct investment. That is Canada. We have the second-fastest growth in the G7. We have made generational investments in housing, infrastructure, productivity, innovation and defence. We are going to build Canada strong.

Oral Questions

Let them get on board. We are going to build this country.

Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a new top export out of this country. It is announcements and MOUs.

Not that long ago, Canadians used to dream of buying a home. Now, under the Liberal Prime Minister, many are starting GoFundMe pages just to pay for essential items for life. In the last five months, 15,000 Canadians had to ask strangers online for help to pay for basic things. Food banks are overwhelmed and families are one emergency away from begging people for help.

If the Prime Minister thinks his plan is working, he is badly out of touch with those paying the price. Will he finally admit that his affordability plan has failed, or does he now think GoFundMe—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

[*English*]

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not want another clip. They do not want just another question. They want action. That is exactly what we have done on this side of the House.

Canadians are concerned about the cost of rent, the cost of food and the cost of gas. That is exactly what we have tackled. We have made record investments in affordable housing, we have just sent the groceries benefit to more than 12 million Canadians and we have suspended the excise fuel tax on gas.

We understand what Canadians want, and we will deliver for Canadians. Every day is a good day to fight for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said here in the House that the cost of living is the best it has been in a decade, but that has not been Canadians' experience. According to a CBC article, some people have even resorted to starting GoFundMe campaigns to pay for basic necessities. Roughly 15,000 crowdfunding campaigns have been launched to help people pay for their groceries, rent and even some medical emergencies.

After 11 years of reckless Liberal spending, Quebeckers now have to resort to asking for charity to survive. Will the Liberals finally admit that they greatly accelerated the current crisis?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the people watching at home today are seeing is the Conservatives' hypocrisy.

Where were the Conservatives when we launched the Canada child benefit, the national school food program, the Canada disability benefit and the Canada groceries and essentials benefit? Where were they when we launched the Canada-wide early learning and child care program? Where were they when we launched the Canada workers benefit?

They were nowhere to be found, but we were there for Canadians.

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals rise here to talk to us about programs when we are asking them to stop doing what is not working and to make decisions so that Canadians can finally make ends meet.

Let us look at one of their programs. Their groceries program will pay out \$16.50 twice a year to Canadians who earn \$53,000, yet the cost of groceries has increased by \$1,000 in one year for a family of four.

Will the Prime Minister reconnect with ordinary people, review these policies and cancel all their spending over the past year that has plunged Canada into a recession?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to my colleague, I would say that what is not working is the Conservatives. They stand up and pretend to show empathy, but when it comes time to vote for concrete measures that help their constituents, they vote against them at every turn.

I encourage my colleague to do some math. In his riding, the Canada child benefit, which he voted against, paid out \$80 million to 13,245 families. He should do the math, and then we will see if he can stand up and tell me that this has no impact on the lives of his constituents.

• (1425)

[*English*]

Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims that affordability is the best it has been in decades, but he should say that to the faces of the 1.5 million jobless Canadians, the 60% of people who are anxious about their finances and the 15,000 people who now use GoFundMe to pay for basics.

Liberal taxes and inflationary spending hike the cost of living. Antidevelopment laws drive out jobs, innovation and \$1 trillion in investment, like in the last five quarters. Canada is the only G20 country in a recession.

When will the self-identified European PM reverse his costly recession policies so that Canadians here at home can afford to thrive, not just survive?

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Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Finance, is not the only person who has good news today. I want to let members know that the 2,000 workers at Woodfibre LNG are working hard, and they will be producing new LNG in 2027. By the way, the 1,000 workers at Cedar LNG are also working hard, and they will be producing new LNG in 2028. More good news is that the sunrise project is going to start turning sod in a couple of weeks for another 1,000 workers.

Maybe the Conservatives can get on board and start helping to build.

Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that more Canadians than ever before need food banks and have to choose between eating, heating and driving. In a year, the PM spent \$1 million on in-flight cushy caviar catering for him and his cronies. That is enough to feed a family of four for 55 years. On one trip, he spent 175,000 tax dollars, which is 92% more than most people make in a year, if they have jobs at all.

While he makes families spend over 120% of their income on rent and food alone, when will the PM cut inflationary spending and his luxury, high-flying lifestyle so that Canadians can afford to live and young Canadians can hope for their futures?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians watching are somewhat confused, because every time we propose a measure to help vulnerable Canadians, like the groceries and essentials benefit, dental care or the Canada child benefit, the Conservatives vote against it. When we are attacked with an unjustified, illegal trade war, what do Conservatives say? They say we are throwing a hissy fit. When we put more measures in place and when the Prime Minister goes abroad to bring back jobs and investment, the Conservatives are against them.

I ask again, what are the Conservatives for?

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, another day, another example of anti-democratic behaviour from this Prime Minister. Today, he is muzzling the opposition to pass Bill C-22, which contains serious privacy violations. Yesterday, he shut down the debate on Bill C-30, which allows him to approve pesticides that were previously banned by Health Canada.

It is simple. Since June 1, the Prime Minister has moved time allocation on no fewer than nine bills. This Prime Minister is muzzling all the parliamentarians who want to do their jobs.

Does he realize that his majority does not give him the right to subvert democracy?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the Bloc Québécois needs to change the subject, but unfortunately, we have to talk about the Bloc Québécois leader's decision to obey his political masters in Quebec City and oppose Alto, oppose its 51,000 jobs and oppose the largest reduction in green-

house gas emissions from a single infrastructure project in Canadian history.

The Bloc Québécois is renegeing on its election promise to support Alto, in obedience to the Parti Québécois.

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, bad projects do not deserve support.

The Prime Minister has a majority. He spends the majority of his time travelling, but he also has a majority in the House. All of his bills are guaranteed to pass. All he is doing with these repeated time allocation motions is preventing MPs from doing their job. All he is doing is trying to push things through so quickly that civil society does not realize what is happening. The reason the Prime Minister is rushing so much is to keep people from noticing the deregulation and abuse of power hidden within his laws.

Why is the Prime Minister incapable of respecting Parliament and democracy?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we make no apology for working tirelessly on Canadians' priorities, on affordability, on delivering major projects and, yes, on major, unifying projects of national interest such as high-speed rail, which the Bloc MPs oppose, despite having supported it prior to the last election.

What are they telling their constituents? The Bloc members made a solemn promise to support high-speed rail, but after receiving instructions from Mr. Plamondon, they are now against it. They need to explain their about-face.

* * *

● (1430)

PRIVACY

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, shutting down debate on Bill C-22 is an abuse of power.

Everyone agrees that an overhaul is needed of this bill, which makes it easier to spy on people intrudes on their privacy.

It forces companies to collect data on citizens and hand it over to the police. It forces telecommunications companies to track people at all times, without their consent.

Basically, the federal government wants to create a backdoor into all of our phones.

How can the government quash debate in order to rush through a bill that goes this far?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to pick up on what the government House leader said, I will not apologize for acting quickly for Quebecers and Canadians.

We have demonstrated this over the past few months, such as with a \$10-billion infrastructure agreement with Quebec to build public transit and deliver the infrastructure that our cities need.

We will also not apologize for moving forward with a major project for Quebec, namely the high-speed rail project.

I also note that the Bloc Québécois is taking its cues from its political masters in Quebec by opposing this project that is so essential for Quebec and its economic development.

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[English]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's independent Information Commissioner said she was disappointed with the Liberal changes to access to information. Disappointed is an understatement, considering that yesterday, the President of the Treasury Board could not even respond to the question, and last week, he could not even find the right page. Will he rescind the changes, yes or no?

Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe that transparency and accountability are fundamental to a strong democracy. As the President of the Treasury Board, I am committed to ensuring that Canadians can access government information in a timely and effective manner. We have launched a consultation paper as part of the process to make the access to information system better. My colleague's comments were part of those consultations.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the midst of a very tough job environment, the government repeatedly chose to give public subsidies to a company responsible for firing Canadian workers and hiring illegal workers instead. Despite being found guilty, the subsidies kept rolling in.

Can the fisheries minister tell us if Ichiboshi L.P.C. is still eligible for public subsidies from her department, yes or no?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure all members of this House that when I make decisions as the fisheries minister, they are always balanced, with information through the department and consultations with people in the communities. I am not going to comment on conspiracy theories, but I will say I am proud of the work we do in the department.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been two years since legislation was passed to establish a foreign influence registry. Two years later, the Liberals have missed every deadline to get the registry up and running. On what date will the foreign influence registry finally be fully operational?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, several weeks ago, this House, as well as the Senate,

Oral Questions

passed a motion declaring Anton Boegman as the commissioner for the transparency registry. We are working toward the establishment of the regulations, and the commission will be up and running in the upcoming weeks.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, delays in the delivery of support ships for the Canadian Navy have been growing longer for years. Meanwhile, the Liberals are threatening to end the lease agreement for the MV *Asterix*, which is in perfect condition.

Does the Liberal government intend to renew the lease or purchase the MV *Asterix*?

• (1435)

Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are strengthening the Royal Canadian Navy from coast to coast to coast, with billions of dollars in investments in the context of one of the largest shipbuilding programs.

This is the largest investment in the Royal Canadian Navy since the Second World War. It includes six Arctic and offshore patrol ships, 15 Canadian combat ships, two joint support ships and up to 12 submarines.

The Government of Canada is proud to make generational investments in the Canadian Armed Forces.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have laws and basic standards to hold those responsible for slavery accountable in Canadian supply chains. Canadian law requires the government to table the anti-slavery report from the ombudsman every year. It has refused to do so for three straight years.

Why does the government keep breaking the law?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, this government always stands with its legal obligations.

At the same time, we have introduced Bill C-35, and we very much hope that the opposition will work with us. Through the summer, we will be consulting, and we will be coming up with a list of goods that will be the subject of sanctions in the case of forced labour. We stand up for human rights. We stand up for the rights of those subjected to slavery in supply chains, and we will not let it happen.

*Oral Questions***PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I suppose it is useful to know that instead of reports, we are going to get consultations. Maybe we will get an answer to the next question.

CPP disability applications are supposed to be decided within 120 days, 80% of the time. Last year, the Liberals managed only 49.3%, less than half.

Why are disabled Canadians being left for months without income while the minister misses her own deadline?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we work diligently to make sure that Canadians get the benefits to which they are entitled. Indeed, the focus of the department is to ensure that Canadians have access to those benefits and supports when they are challenged in applying for those benefits. We will continue that hard work together to make sure every Canadian gets the benefits to which they are entitled.

* * *

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, targets may not matter to that Liberal minister, but disabled Canadians rely on those supports and they certainly deserve better.

Large areas of Gros Morne National Park are covered in dry timber and at risk of wildfire because of the spruce budworm outbreak.

Why have the Liberals refused to join the provincial control program, putting Newfoundland and Labrador forests at risk of fire?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Parks Canada takes the spruce budworm issue very seriously, as well as wildfire control. We are taking measures in all of our national parks to make sure that we are protecting them from wildfires.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with just two weeks to go before July 1, hundreds of people still cannot find housing and are at risk of becoming homeless. Municipalities are investing to address the unprecedented homelessness crisis, including Montreal, which has tripled its budget. Quebec has also increased funding for this issue in its latest budget.

The only government that is not doing more is the federal government. All that Ottawa has done is to renew its unsheltered homelessness and encampments initiative, which it had irresponsibly scrapped.

With just two weeks to go before July 1, will the Liberals increase their funding?

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find my colleague's remarks odd. She knows full well that we are focused

on finding solutions to homelessness. She sits with me on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, where we discuss this issue. She also knows full well that Build Canada Homes was set up with over \$1 billion for transition houses. More than 1,000 units have already been announced. We are working hard on this.

On top of that are all the programs that we introduced, such as the school food program for children. We have cut taxes. We are here to help Canadians and improve affordability. I do not know why the Bloc Québécois members are not supporting us.

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is asking why. It is because homelessness has increased by 20% in Quebec and 199% in Abitibi—Témiscamingue. While encampments have become a permanent fixture, while Pauline Marois has been working on a summit on homelessness, and while municipalities and Quebec have been investing, the federal government has contributed not one red cent.

It even took a public outcry to prevent the Liberals from making cuts. We have an unprecedented crisis on our hands, and it is only going to get worse on July 1.

When will the government acknowledge that fact and do its fair share?

● (1440)

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, homelessness is a serious and urgent problem, and it is a shame that it is being politicized today. Canadians deserve safe, stable housing, and that is why we are going ahead with the national housing strategy, which includes an action plan to address homelessness.

That is why we are investing more than \$1 billion under Build Canada Homes to build transitional housing. That is why we are introducing programs such as Reaching Home, which helps community organizations working to combat homelessness.

The Reaching Home program has already helped more than 112,000 Canadians access stable housing. We are there for Canadians, and we will keep working.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was all fake, all an illusion. Liberal promises to work together on Bill C-22 were hollow from the start. The Liberals will ram through the largest government surveillance operation in a generation.

The Minister of Public Safety promised better. He promised he would work collaboratively, promised he would listen and promised he would take amendments. He is breaking those promises. Police need the tools to catch the bad guys in a digital era, obviously. That is why we proposed a solid compromise: pass the uncontroversial parts of the bill, and continue debating the others.

Will they take that offer?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not how legislation works. We have put forward a comprehensive piece of legislation—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The Chair must be able to hear.

If the minister would start over, hopefully I will be able to hear this time.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, this is not how legislation works. We have put forward a comprehensive piece of legislation. We have consulted with a range of stakeholders, including law enforcement. Parts 1 and 2 go hand in hand. We cannot cherry-pick which parts of the act go into effect.

I will give an example of the obstructionism of the Conservative Party: over 10 hours of discussion on clause-by-clause at the committee, and they have passed seven amendments. Just last week alone, over three hours, they passed one amendment, and in fact, the key leaders on the committee were not even—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola.

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “this is not how legislation works.” That is what the minister just said. Allow me to tell him something. Canadians do not take their orders from the Liberal Party. Conservatives do not take their orders from the Liberal Party. We will scrutinize legislation as we see fit.

We have heard from Canadians concerned about big brother aspects of this bill. We have heard from civil libertarians, experts, law professors who say we should be passing part 1 and scrutinizing part 2.

Why will they not pass part 1 and study part 2?

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combating Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Conservative opposition is not about scrutinizing bills. We are up for scrutiny. We have amended many of our bills, including Bill C-22.

Bill C-22 is a bill that we in Parliament have tried to bring many times because, as I know the Conservatives recognize, we need modern tools to fight terrorism and to fight organized crime, but these Conservatives do not really care. They will oppose anything. Just last week, they opposed harsher sentences for child predators. Who are these people?

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HEALTH

Hon. Mike Lake (Leduc—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a year ago this week, the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences re-

Oral Questions

leased a report commissioned by the Liberal government that identified significant gaps in diagnosis, coordination and access to supports for Canadians with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, or FASD. Since then, virtually nothing has been done to address the critical issues raised by the experts.

Why pay for this report in the first place if the government did not intend to use the findings?

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue. We have worked on many fronts to address many issues in this respect, and I look forward to working with the member as well. Through budget 2025, we have made investments in health research through CIHR, and we will continue to do that.

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● (1445)

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, is being completely mismanaged. As a result, it has become a cakewalk for tax evaders to hack into the accounts of perfectly ordinary, honest people. Unfortunately, when people get hacked, it can take months and months before the CRA can resolve their issues.

I have a simple question for the minister responsible for national revenue. How many cases involving people who were hacked are currently being investigated by the CRA?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question. My colleague knows full well that 100 days ago we implemented a plan to address certain challenges we have observed in the service provided by the Canada Revenue Agency. I can assure members that everyone working at the CRA is doing their best to serve Canadians well. They are ensuring tax integrity. They are ensuring that everyone pays their fair share of taxes.

As we head into summer, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the employees who work at the Canada Revenue Agency.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the president of Grain Farmers of Ontario warned that we cannot have affordable food if farmers cannot afford to farm. Fertilizer prices are crippling, and suppliers are now telling farmers they may not even have enough supply for next season. Canada is the only G7 country that has a tariff on fertilizer imports.

Oral Questions

Can the minister tell me exactly how much the Liberal government has collected from the 35% tariff and how much it has robbed from the pockets of Canadian farmers?

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are caught in a geopolitical situation around the world. We are certainly keeping an eye on the situation. Hopefully, the peace talks are going forward for the Strait of Hormuz.

We understand that there has been a real issue relevant to fertilizer. We are monitoring the situation closely. I met with my G7 partners last week. We had a good discussion. The whole topic was on fertilizer in this country and around the world. We will consider every opportunity to make sure that we stand behind our farmers.

Kent MacDonald (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand that food security is national security. In fact, a Nanos Research survey released this month for Dairy Farmers of Canada found that 94% of Canadians believe it is important that Canada maintain as much control as possible over its food supply. The survey also found significant support for Canadian farmers and the supply management system, which helps ensure a stable and reliable food supply. As a farmer myself, I know the importance of growing, producing and processing more of our food here at home.

Last week our Prime Minister unveiled Canada's national food strategy. Could the Minister of Agriculture—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week was an exciting time for processors, farmers and the Canadian public. This approach is about finding solutions at home that will improve access and affordability, with a \$3.2-billion investment, the largest investment in AAFC's history. It means addressing the underlying challenges for food affordability, the way food is being sold, transported and distributed. That will support farmers, consumers and small independent grocers. A more Canadian food system means one that is more reliable and supports local food, lower costs and stronger communities. More choice means more control and more Canada.

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[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Lac Saint-Charles provides drinking water to nearly 300,000 residents of the Quebec City region. Between 2019 and 2021, I proposed a \$200-million federal investment to protect this resource, and that proposal was supported by the former minister, the current member for Québec Centre. Seven years on, nothing has been done.

Can the Secretary of State for Nature explain why the Liberals have scrapped this crucial investment in protecting Lac Saint-Charles and Quebec City's drinking water?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. It is a pleasure to work with him on a number of issues in the Quebec City region. I

would be happy to discuss this particular issue with him at a later date.

One thing I would like to point out is that there are some issues on which we would like to be able to work with our colleagues from the Quebec City region. The tramway comes to mind, for example. I am pleased to see that he recently got on board with the \$2.75-billion funding for the tramway project in Quebec City. This project is going to be crucial and it will create good jobs for our constituents. As for everything else, I look forward to working with my colleague.

* * *

[*English*]

FIREARMS

Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we can hear from my Quebec colleagues, obviously that was not a good answer to the member's question.

Liberal government documents confirm that nearly 18% of the firearms being confiscated by the Liberal gun grab are .22-calibre rifles, often used to hunt gophers or to shoot pop cans.

Why are Liberals wasting hundreds of millions of dollars on .22s, or “plinkers”, instead of millions of dollars on police officers to lock up violent criminals?

• (1450)

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the misinformation, sadly, continues on firearms. As members are aware, over 140,000 firearms have been declared by individual Canadians as well as businesses. We are in the process of collecting those firearms. What I will—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Now that it is quieter, the hon. Minister of Public Safety may continue.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, the misinformation on firearms continues. Over 140,000 individual firearms have been declared by owners, as well as businesses. We are in the process of collecting them.

We have invested in law enforcement. We are hiring 1,000 new RCMP personnel and 1,000 new CBSA officers.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think we will be trusting the minister's word on what a .22 is, given that he did not know what an RPAL is either.

Manitoba's premier, Wab Kinew, recently said that the Prime Minister is requiring LNG to be shipped through the port of Churchill by 2030 as a requirement for federal support of the port of Churchill plus expansion project. Is that true, yes or no?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we intend to continue working with the Premier of Manitoba, with whom we have an extremely productive relationship.

Indeed, the port of Churchill holds much promise. We will be studying all the options and will be working very hard to complete that and many other nation-building projects in western Canada and right across this country.

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CANADIAN IDENTITY AND CULTURE

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, reports indicate that the Palestinian representative in Canada met with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights during the development of its upcoming Nakba exhibit. This should be a Canadian museum for Canadian human rights stories, not foreign agendas.

The museum is a Crown corporation reporting to the heritage minister. Is the minister aware of these meetings? Does he consider these meetings appropriate, and will he delay the exhibit's opening, pending a full investigation?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, suffice it to say that I am aware of these allegations, but I think the member would join me in saying that it is not the place of the minister or any member of the House to dictate museum policy and what is curated and what is not.

* * *

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, talk about avoiding the answer.

Veterinarians and animal health technicians play a critical role in —

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: This time it is the hon member of the opposition who can start from the top.

David Bexte: Mr. Speaker, the minister avoided the answer.

Veterinarians and animal health technicians play a critical role in the Canadian agriculture system, and they are in short supply.

Neither vets nor animal health techs are covered under the Canada student loan forgiveness program, unlike other professionals. Can the minister explain why these vital professions are not being treated the same?

Oral Questions

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled that in my riding, Lakehead University is opening a new vet school in partnership with Guelph. It is very exciting news for the many people in my riding who are waiting to access veterinarian care.

We will continue to work with provinces and territories on making sure that education is affordable. One way the member can help is to stop voting against Canada student loans and grants, which are 40% higher in the current government.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the AFN exposed that the last decade of Liberal housing strategy has left first nations 157,000 homes short.

Given that Build Canada Homes plans to build only 5,000 homes annually, by what year will the Liberals build 157,000 homes needed for first nations? I would like to know just the year.

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really proud to be here and do the work, and I invite my colleague to work with us in advancing the things we are determining: \$5.9 billion to support on-reserve housing, ensuring that over 55% of first nations have housing plans, ensuring that communities have housing managers and ensuring that they are accessing the training and certification to build those homes, because we are not only building homes, but we are equipping first nations with the resources they need to do the job. Only this government has done that. We can look at the track record of the opposition. I think it is 99 homes, maybe fewer.

* * *

● (1455)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that answer was so empty it echoed.

Five members of the Women Veterans Council have resigned, citing red tape and zero action. Among them are survivors of military sexual trauma, women who stood for Canada and now feel dismissed.

Why has the minister broken her promises, refused to act and completely abandoned these female veterans?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jill McKnight (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank all members of the Women Veterans Council for their service to our country and for the advice and insight they offer as a council. Their lived experiences have shaped important conversations, and I remain grateful to the ongoing conversations. It is a voluntary advisory group, and I respect the decision of any member who chooses to move on to other opportunities. I welcome all advocacy on issues affecting veterans.

* * *

HOUSING

Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, home builders and homebuyers in Ontario are still waiting for the federal government to finalize the regulations to permit them to rebate the HST on all new homes. This is creating more confusion and uncertainty in the market, and it is leaving both buyers and builders in limbo.

My question is very simple: On what date will the Liberal government finally live up to its promise? I want no rambling, just a date.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple answer for the Conservative: Pass Bill C-26. Instead of grandstanding in the House, do something, get on with it, work, vote and pass Bill C-26.

We are in touch with our colleagues in Ontario. We are there for the builders and the homeowners, and we will work for the people of Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, I mentioned that a company from back home, Garaga, had provided the government with overwhelming evidence that garage doors imported from China contained harmful toxic substances that are banned in Canada.

Why, despite these warnings, has the Minister of Health not done anything about this yet?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Garaga is an iconic brand in Canada. I have Garaga garage doors myself. I will continue to support this Quebec-based company, just as I do all Quebec-based companies. If Garaga has an issue it needs to raise with the government, then it should do so, and I can assure the hon. member that we will act very quickly.

* * *

[English]

PRIVACY

Doly Begum (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians cannot fully benefit from the digital economy if they do not trust it. The rules that govern how personal information is collected, used and shared have not kept pace with technology. The

protecting privacy and consumer data act would recognize that. It would recognize privacy as a fundamental right and give Canadians the tools they need to take back control over their data.

Can the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation explain how the bill would protect Canadians and their data?

Hon. Evan Solomon (Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her hard work representing her riding.

Our AI strategy for all is about trust, opportunity and sovereign control. The first pillar is all about trust: a promise to protect our kids, to protect privacy and to protect our citizens' personal information. The protecting privacy and consumer data act would do just that. We would give citizens the rights to deletion and to take down harmful deepfakes. We would act against surveillance pricing to stop price gouging. We would treat children's information as sensitive.

It is common sense. Canadians want it. The Privacy Commissioner supports—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how many citizenships have been issued to non-citizens with bogus documents since the Liberals passed the chain migration bill, Bill C-3, and how many more does the government project may be issued over the next five years?

• (1500)

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been clear. Just because someone has a Canadian ancestor, this does not mean they are automatically eligible for citizenship. They must definitively prove their link to Canada at each and every generation. Genealogy websites are not enough.

My job is to safeguard the integrity of our citizenship program, and I will do everything necessary to protect that.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a country of lakes, mountains and rivers. Sadly, more and more anglers, paddlers and boaters fear they will lose access to Quebec's lakes. While public access points are disappearing or becoming prohibitively expensive, the Liberals are looking the other way and leaving local authorities to fend for themselves.

These waterways belong to all Canadians. When will the Liberal government take action to protect fair access for everyone?

Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises an important issue. Lakes and rivers are indeed a valuable resource for Canadians. That is precisely why we have invested in the nature strategy, which aims to protect 30% of our land and waterways.

However, it is also important to safeguard the right to navigate on lakes. This is an issue of concern to us, and one on which we are continuing to engage with the relevant municipal and provincial authorities.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in July, thousands of federal public servants will return to the office four days a week, but several departments are saying there is not enough office space.

I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board how many employees will not have a desk next month.

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is an important question as we prepare for a return to the office four days a week across the public service. I can assure her that my department, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Treasury Board, is working around the clock to make sure that public servants have the space and the tools they need to do their important work for Canadians.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for far too long, too many first nations have gone without access to safe drinking water, which every community deserves.

Could the Minister of Indigenous Services explain how Bill C-37 would strengthen—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I was able to hear only the beginning. Could the hon. member start from the beginning on this important question?

Hon. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, for far too long, too many first nations have gone without access to safe drinking water, which every community deserves.

Could the Minister of Indigenous Services explain how Bill C-37 would strengthen first nations' jurisdiction over water while helping to ensure safe, reliable drinking water for first nations across Canada?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was an important question. Bill C-37 would ensure that first nations have the authority and means to deliver safe, reliable drinking water in their communities. By affirming jurisdiction over water sources and by also ensuring drinking water and waste water for first nations, we would be enabling the

Oral Questions

development of clear, consistent, first nations-led standards. The authority—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The member for Winnipeg Centre is not allowing the minister to answer the question.

Would the minister continue, please?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty: Mr. Speaker, the authority, clear standards, historic funding and sustained support are at the core of the bill. I am proud to have ensured that this government, the only government, has pushed forth the bill to support real jurisdiction over water systems, to create standards, and to govern these systems according to their rights, priorities and lived reality.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a mess this is. I actually feel bad for the Prime Minister that this is the cabinet he has to deal with. The fisheries minister shrugged because she did not even know what a question was about, before winging it anyway with a non-answer. The foreign affairs minister just said she is consulting to cover up three years of inaction. The public safety minister is refusing to listen to Canadians' concerns on Bill C-22 and is hell-bent on ramming it through. I thought we actually had an overperformer with the treasury board president's finding his notes today, but then the Liberals did not let him answer a question anyway, because he did not have the answer.

Is the Prime Minister happy with his front bench? Canadians sure as heck are not.

● (1505)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, well, it is pretty obvious that the Leader of the Opposition has an issue on his backbench. After all, the colleague sat down at a small desk in a cabin somewhere and wrote out the biography of the leader of the opposition, longhand, and look where he got.

I can tell the House that the Prime Minister, from the G7, from representing us proudly on the world stage, has confidence in the entire team of 174 MPs—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I guess it is getting a little personal today.

The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

*Oral Questions***GROCERY INDUSTRY**

Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats have raised the alarm on surveillance pricing, an invasive and unfair scheme that gouges Canadians. We called on the Liberals to follow the Manitoba NDP government, which moved swiftly to ban this insidious practice. Instead, the government tabled legislation that not only fails to address this issue, but does not even mention it. I guess AI for everyone really means everyone is a target.

Why are the Liberals refusing to protect Canadians from abusive technology that invades their privacy and enables discriminatory pricing?

Hon. Evan Solomon (Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud to have tabled legislation that would protect children, privacy and personal information and give us the opportunity to finally act against surveillance pricing and price gouging, making sure that Canadians have an affordable life. We are doing that with a regulator that will enforce that.

This practice has been praised by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, which said it is very pleased that this represents “a pivotal step for privacy in Canada” and “I welcome the proposals to recognize privacy as a fundamental right, an explicit recognition of the best interests of children, requirements to conduct—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has the floor.

* * *

TAXATION

Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, frankly, no one can believe that answer.

For the first time in history, a human being is a trillionaire. Elon Musk is worth more than \$1,000 billion. Even if he were to spend \$1 million a day, it would take him 2,700 years to spend such an obscene amount of money.

There are people here too with colossal fortunes worth billions of dollars. The Liberals are lavishing them with gifts. At a time when people are living on the street and our public services are crumbling, what are the Liberals doing? They are not doing anything.

When will they have the courage to make the super-wealthy pay their fair share?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House know that every Canadian must pay their fair share of taxes.

More importantly, in response to my colleague, it is important to note that we recently invested \$10 billion. We reached an agreement with the Government of Quebec to invest \$10 billion in Quebec's critical infrastructure. Specifically when it comes to homelessness, we recently announced an investment of over \$150 million so that we can do our part to address this issue.

We will always be there to defend everyone's interests and to ensure that everyone pays their fair share of taxes in Canada.

* * *

● (1510)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: For people across the country, the Canadian Armed Forces recognition program is an opportunity to honour the sacrifices that men and women in uniform make on our behalf.

[*English*]

It is my pleasure to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of five members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are taking part in the Canadian Armed Forces recognition program today.

[*Translation*]

They are Warrant Officer Marjolaine Fournier, Lieutenant-Colonel Christopher Michaud, Sergeant Marylène Martin, Chief Warrant Officer René Gagnon and Ranger Tara Gull.

Hon. members: Hear, hear!

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

Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, during question period, the Leader of the Government in the House made derogatory comments about one of our members. I have to say that any seat one occupies here in the House is just as important as any other, and I would invite him to apologize to all—

The Speaker: There has been much slinging of arrows from both sides of the House. Is there another point of order?

[*English*]

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, during question period, I asked a question about the government subsidizing the companies responsible for hiring illegal workers. The minister described it as a conspiracy theory. I wonder if there would be unanimous consent to table Order Paper question response—

The Speaker: I do not think the member has unanimous consent.

PRIVILEGE

MINISTER STATEMENT DURING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on June 2 by the member for Vancouver East concerning a statement made by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship during the meeting of the committee of the whole to consider the estimates on May 28. According to the member for Vancouver East, the minister said in response to a question that the processing of study permit applications from Palestinian students in Gaza would be accelerated and that decisions would be completed in the next 10 days. The member noted that this statement does not appear in the Debates, but is nonetheless clearly audible in the video recording.

The member for Vancouver East then stated that information she obtained later from departmental officials and affected stakeholders seemed to contradict that statement. She clarified that her goal was not to determine whether the minister deliberately misled the House, but rather to point out that the situation raises substantial doubt as to the accuracy of the information provided. The member argued that parliamentarians must be able to rely on ministerial statements when carrying out their parliamentary duties. She therefore submitted that the circumstances warrant further examination and concluded that she believes there is a prima facie question of privilege.

[Translation]

In response, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons questioned the facts presented by the member for Vancouver East. He stated that the minister did not mislead the committee but instead provided the most accurate information available at the time she made her statement. Furthermore, in his view, the member for Vancouver East relied not on facts that are in the Debates transcript but on an audio recording that is open to interpretation. He also contended that the matter is a dispute as to the facts based on information from sources outside the House. Finally, he argued that the procedure for questions of privilege arising from proceedings of a committee of the whole was not followed.

First of all, the Chair must begin by considering the fact that the statement in dispute was made during proceedings of a committee of the whole. A number of precedents, including a ruling by the Chair on June 19, 2025, have established that, despite certain constraints that may apply, questions of privilege stemming from proceedings of a committee of the whole must normally be raised in that committee before they can be brought to the Chair in the House.

[English]

Second, even if the usual procedure were to be set aside, the precedents are clear about requests that the Chair rule on facts presented in the House whose accuracy is disputed on the basis of external sources. As Speaker Lamoureux said in a decision rendered on November 16, 1971, on page 9619 of the Debates:

...the pertinent precedents tend to establish in the main that statements made outside the House, or documents published elsewhere, ought not to be used for the purpose of questioning statements made in this chamber by hon. members from either side of the House.

Points of Order

More recently, Speaker Regan stated the following in a ruling delivered on November 20, 2017, which appears on page 15303 of the Debates:

Members know well that in any case in which the veracity of what a member of the House has said is called into question, the Chair's role is very limited to the review of the statements made in a proceeding of Parliament. In other words, the Chair cannot comment on what transpires outside of the deliberations of the House or its committees.

Even if the Chair could address statements made in committee of the whole in the absence of a report to the House, and had the minister's statement been accurately quoted, something that the Debates do not enable us to determine in this case, there is no basis for concluding that she contradicted herself or that she intended to mislead the House. The situation, therefore, seems to be a dispute as to the facts.

• (1515)

[Translation]

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, fourth edition, provides the following information in section 3.92:

If the question of privilege involves a disagreement between two (or more) members as to facts, the Speaker typically rules that such a dispute does not prevent members from fulfilling their parliamentary functions, nor does such a disagreement breach the collective privileges of the House.

[English]

Disagreements about the facts are common in the House, and the mere fact that a member believes a statement made by another member, minister or not, is inaccurate is not enough to establish that there are grounds to raise a question of privilege. Accordingly, the Chair cannot find that there is a prima facie question of privilege. I therefore consider the matter closed.

I thank all members for their attention.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ADMISSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 13

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising this afternoon on a point of order concerning the admissibility of Government Business No. 13, which appeared on this morning's Notice Paper. Government Business No. 13 proposes to lay out a program for the remaining consideration of Bill C-22, the Liberal government's legislation concerning so-called lawful access.

While programming motions are, of course, not unheard of in our Westminster system and in Canada, they have become increasingly fashionable, first under the Trudeau government and now under the current Liberal government. In fact, we have witnessed three of them this week alone. What is troubling is that each successive programming motion has been more and more aggressive than the preceding one. Government Business No. 13 introduces a novel feature not seen in previous programming motions: a retroactive deadline for the submission of committee amendments. Subparagraph (a)(ii) states:

if the committee has not completed the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill within 30 minutes of the beginning of the meeting, all remaining amendments that were submitted to the committee by 4:30 p.m. on June 15, 2026, shall be deemed moved, the Chair shall put the question forthwith...

Points of Order

The point, as is clearly evident, is that the deadline set in this notice was yesterday at 4:30 p.m. Therefore, if adopted, Government Business No. 13 would only allow the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to consider amendments that were filed yesterday. The Liberals' proposed deadline for committee amendments for Bill C-22, therefore, possibly preceded its notice of Government Business No. 13. It certainly preceded the publication of the notice, which comes out at about, as I understand it, two o'clock in the morning.

What is more egregious, or perhaps as egregious, than the proposal to ram through the House such a sweeping piece of legislation with significant consequences for the privacy rights of Canadians is that, if adopted, members will also be left with no ability to put forward any further suggestions on how to improve Bill C-22 or strike the right balance between public safety and privacy, because the motion itself prevents and precludes any report stage amendments by members.

Let me draw everyone's attention to paragraphs (b) and (c) of the motion. Paragraph (b) reads, "the bill may be considered at the report stage at any time following the completion of paragraph (a)(iv) of this order, and, when the order is read, it shall be deemed to have been concurred in, as amended, at the report stage". There would be no amendments because the deadline for amendments is retroactive and there is no ability for amendments to be brought forward at report stage.

Let me contrast this with Government Business No. 12, which was the immediately preceding programming motion. That concerned Bill C-30 before the Standing Committee on Finance, and the House adopted it on Monday night. There was a committee deadline in that motion, but it was for 24 hours after notice had been given of the government motion. Members in that case at least had the time to put forward their best and last ideas, knowing that, regardless, the Liberal guillotine was at hand.

I will mention that Government Business No. 12 was not subject to a ruling, so I am not attempting to draw it as an authoritative precedent, but only as an example for the Speaker's consideration.

We have a government that is fascinated with all the ways it can censor Canadians. With Government Business No. 13, the Liberals are now verging into the territory of erasing the rights of members. That is what makes Government Business No. 13 so utterly offensive. The idea of a retroactive deadline is, I believe, entirely unprecedented and, therefore, I would like to go back to several first principles to lay out my initial opposition to this bill.

I will note that I am raising this at the earliest opportunity I can, having simply seen the notice this morning and raising it as quickly as possible. Therefore, I would beg the Speaker's indulgence to provide further arguments should my hon. colleagues across the way also provide theirs.

● (1520)

I will turn to the first principle, Standing Order 1, which we do not often quote in this place. However, I think it is necessary when we are talking about something that is unprecedented and novel. It states:

In all cases not provided for hereinafter, or by other order of the House, procedural questions shall be decided by the Speaker...whose decisions shall be based on the usages, forms, customs and precedents of the House of Commons of Canada and on parliamentary tradition in Canada and other jurisdictions, so far as they may be applicable to the House.

I would also draw the Speaker's attention to Standing Order 13, which, of course, gives you the ability to rule on whether or not any motion is in order in this place.

Beauchesne's Rules and Forms of the House of Commons of Canada, sixth edition, observes at citation 12:

Parliamentary Law is something quite different from the ordinary Civil Law or Common Law. Parliamentary Law is based on centuries of tradition and precedents which have marked the evolution of parliamentary freedoms from the time that the first Parliaments were governed under the Divine Right of Kings to the stage of parliamentary sovereignty which we have now acquired.

One of the House's earliest clerks, Sir John Bourinot, in *Parliamentary Procedure and Practice in the Dominion of Canada*, second edition, at page 258, reiterated one of these most essential principles, which has evolved over the centuries. He said:

The great principles that lie at the basis of English parliamentary law have...been always kept steadily in view by the Canadian legislatures; these are: To protect the minority and restrain the improvidence and tyranny of the majority, to secure the transaction of public business in a decent and orderly manner, to enable every member to express his opinions within those limits necessary to preserve decorum and prevent an unnecessary waste of time, to give full opportunity for the consideration of every measure, and to prevent any legislative action being taken heedlessly and upon sudden impulse.

I know the Speaker will be aware of this general principle, but I draw him again to the section that refers to protecting the minority and restraining "the improvidence and tyranny of the majority". That principle is reinforced again by our present-day Clerk, with his own comments at paragraph 5.1 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, fourth edition, which says:

...over the years, the ideal of "protecting the minority" has adapted to the modern dictates of an efficient legislative body.... Nevertheless, it remains true that parliamentary procedure is intended to ensure that there is a balance between the government's need to get its business through the House and the opposition's responsibility to debate that business....

Sir George's principles are also quoted authoritatively in *Parliamentary Procedure in Québec*, third edition, at page 49:

The rules of parliamentary procedure as a whole, then, must reflect these principles and create a balance between them. Procedure is thus at the service of noble ideals that ensure the highly democratic nature of the parliamentary institution. Even though they may sometimes be considered superfluous, the fact remains that the rules of procedure are extremely important for parliamentarians and for the functioning of the institution.

While Bill C-22 contains some measures that law enforcement agencies have asked Parliament for, part 2 of the bill and, indeed, certain sections of part 1 raise serious concerns regarding privacy, civil liberties, government powers and other issues. The government's own charter statement acknowledges this. Moreover, major Canadian industries and technology companies, including Google, Meta, Apple and others, have raised serious questions about encryption provisions, the requirement to collect and store the personal information of Canadians and the powers contained in part 2 for the minister to issue secret orders to companies.

The powers and the scope of this bill should be carefully considered, defined and targeted. This requires the balancing act that I referred to earlier. Parliament needs to get this right. Doing that requires time, patience and studying the procedures of this House, but Government Motion No. 13 would prohibit that.

Perhaps support for the legislation within the caucus of the Liberal Party has been declining more swiftly than we thought, after hearing from witnesses and stakeholders, and, therefore, a renewed urgency is upon the Liberals. However, that is no excuse to push this bill through the House on the very last week of its sitting.

● (1525)

It may be useful to recall the words of Speaker Milliken in a ruling he delivered on March 29, 2007, at page 8136 of the debates. He said:

...neither the political realities of the moment nor the sheer force of numbers should force us to set aside the values inherent in the parliamentary conventions and procedures by which we govern our deliberations.

The political realities of the Liberal government, facing increasing and growing scrutiny on this censorship agenda, are no excuse for what the Liberal House leader is proposing through his notice this morning.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, Government Business No. 13 has not yet been proposed, but I wanted to raise this matter at the earliest opportunity to provide you sufficient time to consider it. Should you wish us to raise this point of order when the motion is moved, we will do that as well.

As your predecessor said, also on March 29, 2007, at page 8137 of the debates:

Unlike the situation faced by committee chairs, a Speaker's decision is not subject to appeal. All the more reason then for the Chair to exercise its awesome responsibility carefully and to ensure that the House does not, in the heat of the moment, veer dangerously off course.

In our submission, Government Business No. 13 would do that. It would see this House go dangerously off course, all in the service of a bill that would therefore be denied the careful and detailed scrutiny it requires.

Let me finish by quoting citation 18 of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, fourth edition:

We use the words "House of Commons" very often without pausing to reflect upon what those words mean. The word "Commons" means the people. This is the house of the people; sitting on both sides of this house; and on both sides of the Speaker are representatives of every constituency of Canada. Collectively those of us who meet in this Chamber represent all Canadians. That is our responsibility! That is our duty. Our rights are important only to the extent that those rights represent the rights of the people themselves. If the traditional rights of the members of this House are released, limited or arbitrarily curtailed in any way, it is not our rights that are of concern. What is vitally important is that in that curtailment of rights—there is a limitation of the rights—of the people themselves. The freedom that we have here to shape and guide legislation, no matter on which side of the House we might sit, is part of the very freedom which we cherish here in this country of ours. It is here in the House of Commons, to which all the people of Canada must look for just laws properly considered and properly made, that Canadians in every part of Canada must look for the greater part of their freedom and for the assurance of that type of government which will be itself an expression of the freedom which has come down to us through so many generations of sacrifice and tremendous efforts.

The retroactive committee amendment deadline proposed in Government Business No. 13 is offensive to the rich and deep tradi-

Points of Order

tion of parliamentary law. It is compounded by the inability of members to move motions at report stage, effectively preventing them from providing any more input into this bill. It cannot be in order that a bill provides a deadline retroactively, known only to the government members and utilized only by the government members, unbeknownst to any other member of this House until that deadline has passed.

As such, it is my submission that Government Business No. 13 is not in order and, therefore, the whole of the motion should be equally called out of order.

● (1530)

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to respond to the point of order raised by my colleague, respecting the effect of the programming motion related to Bill C-22 in the context of our collective and individual privileges.

I submit that the matter is a question of whether the House has the ability to regulate its proceedings that appear to restrict the privileges of the House. I can state categorically that the House does have the powers to limit and, in some cases, waive its privileges. Page 65 of the fourth edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states:

As a collectivity, the House of Commons has privileges that enable its members to fulfill their constitutional duties....

The two most dominant rights or powers are the right of the House to regulate its own internal affairs and the power to discipline.

The programming motion that would govern the consideration of Bill C-22 seeks to achieve to set a procedural process for the disposal of the bill. The House is no stranger to innovative and constructive ways to dispose of business before the House and in committees. During the pandemic, the House adopted motions that would have normally been seen as a restriction on the privileges of members and the House more generally. Indeed, the exclusive power of the House to regulate internal affairs is the cornerstone of the architecture of parliamentary privilege. The ability to regulate and control its own debates, agenda and proceedings relating to the legislative and deliberative functions is one of the most important privileges that the Constitution bestows upon Parliament.

I submit that the exercise of these powers is central to the matter before the House. The House can give direction to committees, which are creatures of the House. The House can decide, by a majority of the voices, to structure the legislative process for any given bill. This is precisely the case with the proposal before the House. Therefore, I conclude that the matter is clearly within the House's powers to regulate its internal affairs in respect of the legislative agenda.

Anna Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have an official cake for the Prime Minister—

The Speaker: No. That is out of order.

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, it is more than just out of order. The member has brought cake into the House of Commons, which is incredibly disrespectful of the rules of this House.

Government Orders

I would suggest that the member apologize to the House for disrespecting it in this way.

The Speaker: That is a prop, essentially, so it is not permitted.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Drummond.

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform you that the Bloc Québécois reserves the right to respond at a later date to the point of order raised by the member for York-Durham.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

COMBATTING HATE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the amendment made by the Senate to Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places), and of the amendment.

Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton.

[*English*]

The combatting hate act has been before this House for nine months. During those nine months, we have had extensive debate in this place, in the other place and at committee. This bill is important.

I want to take members back to what started the process of amending our hate laws in a way that is broader than the way they have been amended in the last 30 years.

In the spring of 2024, in my own riding of Mount Royal, the Jewish community centre, the Montreal Holocaust Museum and The Jewish Public Library were surrounded by demonstrators. They were surrounded by demonstrators yelling hateful things. They were surrounded by demonstrators carrying signs, some of which supported terrorist organizations. However, the police failed to arrest people. They failed to stop what was a demonstration that descended into illegality. They said at the time that they did not have clear enough instructions or clear enough rules related to when a demonstration outside of a community centre, a school, a temple, a church or a synagogue has crossed the line.

The combatting hate act makes clear that these buildings deserve special protection. It creates new intimidation and obstruction offences related to protests outside of community centres, places of worship and schools that make it clear that these buildings deserve special protection. It makes it clear that a person cannot intimidate someone from entering that building to hear a speaker they want to hear, to worship as they want to worship or to attend their classes. It makes it clear that a person cannot obstruct people from entering or leaving the building, which is what happened that night in March 2024. At the time, I called for this change to the criminal law.

[*Translation*]

I said that, because the police told me that they were unable to take action, the Parliament of Canada has a duty to act, to rewrite existing criminal laws so that they are clearer and so they provide more tools to police officers.

The same thing happened with respect to Mr. Charkaoui. He said things that were absolutely hateful in the streets of Montreal, but the prosecutors did not take action.

[*English*]

We ended up in a situation where the House set up a committee. I asked for the justice and human rights committee to study anti-Semitism. We did, and in December 2024, we put out a unanimous report, on most issues. Yes, there was dissent, but the dissent was not on the vast majority of issues, including the intimidation and obstruction offence. However, that has not stopped what the Prime Minister called the “crisis of anti-Semitism” that has overwhelmed the western world, including Canada, where over 70% of religious-based hate offences are against the Jewish community, which makes up 1.2% of the population, and where a Jewish Canadian has a 19 times greater chance of having a hate crime committed against them than the average Canadian.

I want to point out that two weeks ago there was an attempted arson attack on a temple in Westmount, Temple Emanu-El, where I joined the Minister of Canadian Identity, former senator Marc Gold, and the Secretary of State for Youth to support the community at services. This law has a stand-alone hate provision, which can be used alongside the arson charges that gentleman will face, to make sure the person who is charged will face more jail time than previously.

We also have provisions in this bill to say that when people fly terrorist symbols, the Nazi hakenkreuz or the SS bolt, or now the noose, which was added by the Senate in its recent amendment, in a way that inspires hate against a community, they would now easily be charged by the police.

• (1540)

The bill offers greater protection for minority communities across this country, and for majority communities, by the way. It offers greater protections to Christians as well, who are a majority. It delivers protections to all religious faiths. It delivers protections to the LGBTQ+ community, the indigenous communities and other communities that face hate. Why would anyone be against it? Why would anyone be against this bill?

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The only argument I have heard to date against this bill, the number one reason I have heard, is that the law is not being enforced and we should just enforce the existing law, as if the federal government was responsible for the enforcement of the Criminal Code. This is something that is in the hands of the provinces. The decisions on whether to charge people are made by local municipal police, in most cases, and provincial prosecutors, not the federal government. The argument that we should not give police the tools they say they need to prosecute these crimes, because we should just tell them to do what they are supposed to do, does not wash, because it is essentially saying that the federal government should do nothing.

We have the ability to write the Criminal Code, and we are doing so. With this bill, when it is enacted, and with the new bail and sentencing reform bill, which just received royal assent, we can now, as the Minister of Public Safety confirmed, go to the provinces and territories, have a PT meeting with the provinces and territories, and say that we need to act together to train police and prosecutors. We need specialized hate crime prosecutors across this country, to be named by the provinces. We need, most importantly, to have prosecutorial directives or other measures, where police are told by the provincial attorneys general how they should prosecute these crimes. It should be consistent across this country. The passing of this flurry of justice bills is an opportunity for us.

I also want to address some of the misinformation I heard earlier today in the debate. First, one member talked about parents being worried about what they can say at the dinner table. Private discussions are not covered under the wilful promotion of hatred provisions under section 319 of the Criminal Code. To have members tell people that they have to worry about what they say at their dinner table is knowingly false. It is not true.

Second, there were claims that the government would go out there and charge people, that somehow one minister's comments would lead to a government that could go out and say that people should be charged. However, we live in a system where independent prosecutors, working with police, make these decisions. They are not influenced by what a government person tells them to do or not to do in any individual case. The only way for the government to have its view is prosecutorial directives that apply to an entire class of people, which would come from the provincial attorneys general, not the federal one usually. I am kind of shocked to hear these claims that are so far out of reality that it diminishes what we are trying to do in the law.

Finally, let me be absolutely clear. We also inserted a provision for greater clarity, to make clear that this is not the case, but we should not have had to do that, because it is obvious that this is not the case. People will not be charged because they read, quote or preach the Bible, the Quran, the Torah or any other holy book. This is entirely made up. It is negated by the Charter of Rights. It is negated by the "for greater certainty" provision in the bill.

This is a really important bill. As a member of the Jewish community who has felt this hate, I know that every major organization in my community supports this bill. It is a really important bill to get hate off our streets, to make sure criminals get off our streets and to make sure there is deterrence. I would call upon everyone to support this bill.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I would put to the member that the Orthodox Jewish community and the religious leaders within the Jewish community are overwhelmingly opposed to the removal of the religious exemption. I would encourage the member to take their concerns seriously.

Moreover, the idea that a statute that denies religious freedom and attacks freedom of speech is not a big deal because the charter protects religious freedom is not great comfort to most people. It may be that this law could be found unconstitutional, if a person who is charged then addresses the issue of religious freedom through the courts and eventually gets a remedy for that, but that is a long and difficult process for an individual to go through. It would be better if we did not pass laws that violate religious freedom in the first place, therefore not requiring that kind of charter action.

Why is the member proceeding with this in light of those obvious concerns, especially from the Orthodox Jewish community?

● (1545)

Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, the organizations that speak for the organized Jewish communities, all of them, support the bill, whether it is CIJA, B'nai Brith, the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center, the numerous groups that Mark Sandler has assembled in Toronto or the Canadian Women Against Antisemitism. I do not know of any major Jewish organization in the country that does not support this bill, so I do not believe that to be true. Most of the Orthodox Jewish rabbis I know support this bill, so I do not believe that is true. There may be some who do not, just like there are some in every religion who do not, but the vast majority of Canadian Jews have been asking for this bill and want this bill.

As to the question of religious freedom, there is nothing in this bill that would thwart religious freedom. We removed a defence that has never successfully been used in Canadian history.

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was thinking along the same lines as my colleague from Mount Royal. I congratulate him on his speech. Indeed, the Bloc Québécois's call over the past several years to remove the religious exemption from the Criminal Code has finally been included in Bill C-9, which we are debating today.

Like my colleague from Mount Royal, I have never heard any group representing the Jewish community speak out against this request from the Bloc Québécois. On the contrary, it is seen as yet another tool to protect Jewish communities, which have been particularly targeted by hate crimes over the past few years and even in recent days. Once again, we are witnessing extremely troubling acts of anti-Semitism in our society .

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I would like to know what my colleague thinks. In fact, he just touched on the answer a bit in his response to our Conservative colleague, but I want to know what he thinks the repeal of this exemption will mean for the sense of security among Jewish communities in Canada.

Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, I believe that this will foster a sense of security for all communities, because no one wants to be the target of hatred.

It is true that CJA-Québec said that it supports the Bloc Québécois and the proposal that it put forward a few years ago. We saw what was happening on the streets of Montreal and the fact that no prosecutor was taking action due to the potential use of this religious defence.

If individuals promote hatred on the street, they should not be able to use their beliefs to justify hatred against groups. It is also very important to say that this defence has never been successful in a Canadian court since the law has been on the books.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I take a look at what happens in our environment today, unfortunately the reality is that there is a great deal of hatred that is out there. There is an expectation, and the Prime Minister and the government responded in the last election, to bring forward hate legislation. Bill C-9 is all about doing the right thing, along with fulfilling an election platform issue.

I am wondering if my colleague can just provide his thoughts on the government's, and in particular the Prime Minister's, commitment to bring this legislation, present it and ultimately see it through.

Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, my very first conversation with the Prime Minister was about this issue. The very first time I talked to the Prime Minister was during the Liberal leadership race in 2025. Our very first conversation centred around intimidation, obstruction and the need to change the law to protect community buildings, and the Prime Minister, to his great credit, immediately said that, yes, he supported that. It was a part of the Liberal platform, and we are acting on our platform.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, when I was first elected to the House of Commons in 2019, I came with a deep sense of gratitude toward the people of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, who had placed their trust in me. That was the name of my riding at the time.

I also arrived with a conviction that has been with me for many years, that Quebec is a nation and that this nation must be able to freely choose its future. I became a member of the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois when I was 16 years old. Since then, my involvement has taken many forms. Activism, studying, research, teaching, writing and, ultimately, political representation. These different steps were always guided by the same desire to understand the world that we live in and to contribute in a small way to the advancement of Quebec.

Over the past few years, I have had the privilege of representing our region in this House. I have risen in this place to defend the interests of our workers, our businesses, our agriculture and our communities. I have brought Quebec's voice into debates on international trade, the economy, defence and the choices shaping our collective future. I have also learned how battles are fought here, what crisis management is about, and the importance of dialogue despite differences. Often, behind the sometimes heated debates that pit us against each other, are women and men sincerely devoted to the common good. For that, I want to thank my colleagues from every party, along with House staff members and everyone who contributes on a daily basis to keeping our institutions running.

However, my time here has also strengthened some of my convictions. I have witnessed the full scope of the talent, resources and creativity that Quebec possesses and that it will need to rise to the future challenges that await it. I have also seen the limits it confronts when it tries to pursue its national priorities within a political entity whose interests sometimes diverge from its own. This observation has not discouraged me, on the contrary. It has strengthened my faith in Quebec's capabilities. It has strengthened my conviction that our nation must continue building its institutions, its economy, its culture and its capacity to act.

Throughout our history, Quebecers have often made the most progress when they chose boldness over resignation. We have built institutions. We have developed an economy. We have asserted our culture. Generation after generation, we have demonstrated that we can accomplish great things when we have confidence in ourselves. That confidence is what inspires me today. Public service remains one of the greatest privileges a person can have. No matter where we are called to serve, our duty remains the same, and that is to work with integrity, diligence and loyalty.

Once again, I thank the people of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton for the honour they have bestowed upon us. I would like to thank my family, my friends, my associates and everyone who has supported me on this journey. I thank all the staffers who have worked in my constituency office over the years. One of them has been with us from the very beginning, and that is Amélie, my wonderful constituency assistant. I would like to thank all the party supporters who led us to three victories, with an increasing number of votes every time. I would like to thank my predecessors, Yvan Loubier and Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac, who have always been very supportive. I thank them for their invaluable advice.

I cannot leave the House without expressing my heartfelt gratitude to my Bloc Québécois colleagues. Over the years, I have had the privilege of belonging to a political party made up of people who care deeply about Quebec and about advocating for Quebec. My colleagues are competent, generous and dedicated, and their friendship and support have meant so much to me in the political arena and beyond.

I am also especially grateful to our leader. I call him our leader because, even though I am listed as independent, I am still a Bloc Québécois member and activist and will remain so until we achieve independence. His leadership, political acumen and confidence have enabled me to grow as a parliamentarian and as a representative of our fellow citizens. I have learned so much working alongside him. The Bloc Québécois will continue to play an essential role in advocating for Quebec.

• (1555)

I am now taking on a new challenge, or rather, I have decided to fight this battle elsewhere, but I am still motivated by the sense of hope I felt at age 16 when I first joined the party. My hope is for a Quebec that makes its own choices, that has faith in its capabilities and that is resolutely focused on the future. I will continue to devote myself entirely to this cause until Quebec becomes a country.

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me thank the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton for his remarks and for the years he has spent serving the people of his riding.

Although I do not share his political goals, especially the ones he has pursued here in Ottawa, I believe he is heading to a place where he will be able to speak about independence and sovereignty to his heart's content. On behalf of all my Conservative colleagues, I wish him not success in his mission but rather that he continue his work for the people he represents, just as we all do here with heart, joy, and passion.

Hon. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to salute my colleague. It has been a pleasure working with him over the past few years, and I want to extend my best wishes to him. I wish him all the best for the future. We will miss him, even though we have differences of opinion about our country. However, over the past few years I have seen that he has worked hard and has always been there to support Quebec, Quebecers and his constituents. It is always a pleasure to work with someone who is professional and does their homework.

I wish him all the best for the future.

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton made an announcement today, June 17, or maybe it is June 18. I am not very good with dates, as my colleague knows. Today, June 16, he announced that he is leaving us to run for the Parti Québécois in Quebec's general election this fall. I want to congratulate this extraordinary colleague who wears such sharp suits and ties and has such a unique sense of style. He is an activist.

That is a privilege that we have as members of the Bloc Québécois. Our party is full of activists, men and women of conviction who are dedicated to the interests of Quebecers and to a great and noble cause: making Quebec a country. The member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton now intends to champion this cause at the Quebec National Assembly.

We were colleagues and, from now on, we will be allies. What a colleague he was. He has done impeccable work as the critic for international trade over the past six years, whether in the midst of a

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trade war or a pandemic. He has masterfully defended the aluminum, forestry and aerospace industries, among others.

He worked with the member for Berthier—Maskinongé to protect supply management, and he has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to combatting forced labour. Everything he did in the House, he did with conviction and generosity. He is an activist.

The Bloc Québécois is losing a member who is appreciated by everyone, a friend. Personally, I am also losing a riding neighbour with whom I had the opportunity to laugh and have fun, and I will miss that.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I thank the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton for his years of service and his sincere convictions. I look forward to working with him in the future. I am sure we will meet each other again in our efforts to fight for Quebec as a country.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise. Today is a sad day because our dear colleague, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, has made this decision, which was already well known before he gave his last speech.

However, it is important for me to thank him for his friendship, for his very hard work on the important issues facing Canada—I hope he forgives me for saying so—as well as the issues facing Quebec. I wish him all the best in the future, and I hope he will continue to think about the rest of Canada, because we need the values that are embodied every day by the Bloc Québécois.

• (1600)

[English]

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hate is real, and it is doing damage in communities across this country. No Canadian should be intimidated because of who they are, how they worship, what they look like, where they come from or what they believe.

The question before us is not whether hate should be taken seriously. The question is whether Bill C-9 would actually make Canadians safer. The problem we hear about again and again is not the absence of words in the Criminal Code; it is the failure to act when people break the law.

Communities are not safer when Parliament adds more words. They are safer when police respond quickly, when charges are laid where evidence supports them, when prosecutors have the resources to move cases forward, when repeat offenders face real consequences and when victims have confidence that the justice system is willing to protect them.

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The number and range of organizations that have raised alarms about Bill C-9 are stunning. It is not just one political party, it is not just one faith community and it is not just one type of advocacy group. Civil liberties organizations across the political spectrum have warned that this bill risks sweeping too broadly and chilling lawful expression and peaceful protest. A broad array of community organizations from across the political spectrum have warned that vague criminal law can be used unevenly and can fall hardest on the very communities it claims to protect.

Progressive and traditional faith groups alike have warned about the removal of long-standing protections for good-faith religious expression. Legal and constitutional voices have raised serious concerns about the balance between public safety and fundamental freedoms. That breadth of opposition should give every member of the House pause, because when civil liberties groups, religious organizations, community advocates, legal experts and grassroots coalitions from so many walks of life all tell Parliament it is on the wrong track, the responsible thing to do is to listen. It is not to push ahead and dismiss those concerns as being fringe, unserious or misleading.

The people raising these concerns are not defending hate. Many of them work every day, tirelessly, against hate, racism and violence. Their point, when they came to this place and to the other place to share their views on this bill, was to tell us that bad law can make hard problems worse. Their point has been that criminal law must be precise, fair and enforceable. When Parliament writes vague laws in the name of safety, it can create uncertainty and the opposite of safety for ordinary Canadians, while doing little to stop those who are already willing to break the law.

That is the core weakness of Bill C-9. It tries to show strength through wording rather than through action or results, and yet it is remarkably confusing and imprecise in its wording. In that, Bill C-9 risks blurring the line between hateful conduct, which must be punished, and lawful expression, which must remain protected even when it is controversial, offensive and deeply unpopular. A mature democracy can punish violence and intimidation without giving the state a vague mandate to police belief, scripture, protest or political speech.

For the communities that are counting on this bill, the Minister of Artificial Intelligence failed just last night to answer the key question they are asking: Who would the police be able to arrest when this law is passed who they cannot arrest today? How would this bill help bring order to the chaos that has taken over the streets in some communities right now? How would this bill actually stop the bullets, the fires and the death threats?

• (1605)

Instead of providing answers and safety, the government brought forward a bill that has divided communities, alarmed civil society and created uncertainty about how far the long arm of the criminal law would reach. That is not careful work. That is not the careful work that Canadians expect from the House. It is not the careful work that is required when fundamental freedoms are at stake. Opposing the bill does not mean accepting hate. What it means is demanding a better answer.

I will be the last speaker on the bill, not because members of Parliament have nothing left to say, not because the concerns of the groups that have come to the committee to meet with members of Parliament have had their concerns answered and not because the communities that are so worried that they will be affected by the bill have been heard. I will be the last speaker on the bill because the government has chosen to end the debate.

I have said, many times in the House, that just because the Liberal majority can do something, it does not mean it should. Power gives a government the ability to move quickly but it does not give it wisdom. It does not turn a flawed bill into a good one. It does not turn words into results.

In the coming weeks and months, Canadians will see what the bill would not do. It would not make a synagogue safer when threats are not met with enforcement. It would not make a mosque safer when police do not have the tools or resources to act quickly. It would not make a church, temple, school or community centre safer if the justice system still cannot follow through. It would not reassure vulnerable Canadians if the government confuses passing a bill with solving a problem.

When those failures become clear, no one on that side of the House should pretend they were not warned. They were warned by civil liberties groups. They were warned by faith communities of all kinds. They were warned by legal experts. They were warned by organizations from many different walks of life, many of whom rarely agree on much else but agreed on this. They agreed that Bill C-9 is not the careful, enforceable, unifying response that Canadians deserve.

The government had a choice. It could have listened. It could have fixed the bill. It could have spent the time necessary to work with the provinces to truly hear what they need, not in terms of words but in terms of enforcement, in terms of resources, in terms of real support. It could have brought forward a measure focused on real enforcement, real protection and real accountability. Instead, the government chose closure. They chose more words on paper.

None of us are safer or more united for those choices. If this government is not interested in meaningful debate, we might as well save our breath.

I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

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

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

Before the Clerk announced the result of the vote:

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mirabel.

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that, during the vote, I was subject to the malicious influence of the member for Jonquière. I therefore seek unanimous consent and wish to vote against.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Jonquière.

Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that I, too, was misled by the member for Jonquière, and that I wish to change my vote and vote against the motion.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Shefford.

Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is always ready to work, but the moral of the story is that I will no longer listen to the men when casting my vote today. That is the end of that.

I confirm that I, too, am voting against.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I would also like my vote to be counted as a “no”.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 163)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Anderson	Anstey
Arnold	Au
Baber	Bailey
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Bélangier (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt)
Berthold	Bexte
Block	Bonk
Borrelli	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Chambers	Chong

Cobena	Cody
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Davies (Niagara South)	Dawson
Deltell	DeRidder
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Duncan
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)
Falk (Provencher)	Genuis
Gill (Calgary Skyview)	Gill (Brampton West)
Gill (Calgary McKnight)	Gill (Windsor West)
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)	Goodridge
Gourde	Groleau
Guglielmin	Gunn
Hallan	Hardy
Ho	Hoback
Holman	Jackson
Jansen	Khanna
Kibble	Kirkland
Kmiec	Konanz
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kronis	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lawton
Lefebvre	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd	Lobb
Mahal	Majumdar
Malette (Kapusking—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)	Mantle
Martel	May
Mazier	McCauley
McLean (Calgary Centre)	Melillo
Menegakis	Moore
Morin	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Poilievre
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Reynolds
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ross
Rowe	Ruff
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Small
Steinley	Stevenson
Strahl	Strauss
Stubbs	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Uppal	Van Popta
Vien	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Williamson	Zimmer — 130

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Members

Acan	Al Soud
Ali	Alty
Anand	Auguste
Bains	Baker
Bardeesy	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Begum
Belanger (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River)	Bendayan
Bittle	Blanchette-Joncas
Bonin	Boulerice
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Champagne
Champoux	Chang
Chartrand	Chatel
Chen	Chenette

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Chi	Church
Clark	Connors
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Dandurand
Danko	DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont	Deschênes
Deschênes-Thériault	Desrochers
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Earle	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson	Fancy
Fanjoy	Fergus
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Fry	Gainey
Garon	Gasparro
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)
	Gould
Gladu	Greaves
Grant	Guilbeault
Guay	Hajdu
Gull-Masty	Harrison
Hanley	Hirtle
Hepfner	Hogan
Hodgson	Hussen
Housefather	Idlout
Iacono	Jeneroux
Jaczek	Joseph
Johns	Kelloway
Kayabaga	Klassen
Khalid	Kwan
Koutrakis	Lamoureux
Lambropoulos	Lapointe (Sudbury)
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)	Lattanzio
Larouche	Lavack
Lauzon	Leitão
Lavoie	Lightbound
Lemire	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Long	MacDonald (Malpeque)
Ma	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
MacDonald (Cardigan)	Maloney
Malette (Bay of Quinte)	McKelvie
Martin	McKnight
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McPherson
McLean (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke)	Mendès
Ménard	Miedema
Michel	Mingarelli
Miller	Myles
Morrissey	Nathan
Naqvi	Noormohamed
Nguyen	Ntumba
Normandin	Olszewski
Oliphant	Osborne
O'Rourke	Petitpas Taylor
Perron	Provost
Powlowski	Rana
Ramsay	Rochefort
Robertson	Royer
Romanado	Saini
Sahota	Sari
Sarai	Sawatzky
Savard-Tremblay	Sgro
Schiefke	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sheehan	Simard
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Solomon
Sodhi	Ste-Marie
Sousa	Sudds
St-Pierre	Thompson
Tesser Derksen	

Turnbull	Valdez
van Koeverden	Vandenbeld
Villeneuve	Vis
Watchorn	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zerucelli
Zuberi — 189	

PAIRED

Members

Anandasangaree	Bezan
Blois	Fuhr
Gaheer	Gallant
Godin	Joly
Kelly	Kuruc
Lalonde	LeBlanc
McGuinty	McKenzie
Plamondon	Shipley — 16

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

[*English*]

Pursuant to order made on Monday, June 15, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the consideration of the Senate amendment to Bill C-9 now before the House.

The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

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

● (1655)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded vote, please.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 17, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Riding Mountain, Health; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Environment; the hon. member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Health.

* * *

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 11—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-26

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the consideration of Government Business No. 11, I move:

That debate be not further adjourned.

S. O. 57

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise or to use the “raise hand” function so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in the question period.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here, and I am thankful this debate is allowed to continue. I am surprised that it has to go through this last half hour of questions for the minister, but it is an interesting bill we are debating here today.

We want to make sure that we get to the bottom of everything that is happening in the House of Commons. Of course, we know it is springtime. It is actually a great time to be sitting in Ottawa and debating the business of the country, making sure we are moving forward in holding the government to account and making sure that the legislation we bring forward is the best it is going to be for Canadians.

I beseech the minister, if he can, to actually take a look at the bill. This is his fourth Crown corporation, and there are no solutions so far. There is lots of money going out the door and there are lots of announcements, but no solutions have been put forth to actually aid Canadians and bring lower housing costs across Canada.

What does the minister think he would accomplish with even more money and another bureaucracy that has not been accomplished along the way with everything else that has been done so far in this field? The lack of accomplishments is stark. Can he please address why he thinks it is going to be different this time?

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, this debate is about the housing supply act before the House, which is about \$1.7 billion that would be distributed among the provinces and territories to boost housing supply.

We already have an uptake on this with the province of Ontario. It was announced a few months ago. Ontario, thanks to the federal support that is tied to the bill, would be rebating the full 13% of the harmonized sales tax, the HST, on new homes up to \$1 million. Buyers of those new homes up to \$1 million could save up to \$130,000. When we combine that with the initiative around reducing development charges, which is 30% to 50% with municipalities in Ontario and is administered by the province of Ontario, it is an additional up to \$70,000.

All this is in response to the crisis that Ontario, particularly the GTA, has had with the housing market. There is oversupply in the housing market and other challenges, such as uncertainty in the market, buyers not buying and builders not being able to move on projects. This is about getting the housing market going across the country, particularly in Ontario and B.C.

● (1700)

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister minds addressing whether any of this money would be available for municipalities that are quite small. Despite their not being perhaps as flashy as big announcements in the major cities across Canada, these municipalities, in previous Liberal iterations of bloated federal government programs and funding, could

not access the type of funding that they needed to spur small-scale housing projects in their municipalities.

Can the minister comment on whether Liberals are going to get it right this time and ensure that all municipalities within the country can access funding for housing projects or whether they going to forget about rural Manitoba and rural Canada once again?

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, we absolutely cannot forget about the important housing needs in smaller communities. Rural Canada faces many of the same challenges in terms of affordability and housing supply. Particularly in the north, housing supply is a huge challenge.

Build Canada Homes is an agency focused on making sure the supply side is boosted, but in this case, the funding would be going to the provinces and territories. Ontario has given us the first example of what can be done. It is choosing to use its funding to effectively eliminate the HST for homebuyers throughout Ontario. It would benefit homebuyers and home builders, by extension, across all of Ontario, from urban to rural. Obviously that is a much-needed break on the HST for the homebuyers. That would be provided for in Ontario because of the housing supply bill.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a Prime Minister who is really eroding the foundations of our parliamentary democracy. He is never here, yet he is imposing some of the most draconian measures on parliamentary debate. The motion before the House would impose on Bill C-26 that there would be one more speaker for each party at second reading, and then after the vote at second reading, it would be deemed adopted at all stages, with no committee study, no report stage debate and no third reading debate.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the member for Whitby is saying, “perfect”. This is what Liberals want. They want to shut down debate. This would not just be closure of debate at a stage. It would be shutting debate down at all stages, with no possibility for committee study or amendment.

This is just an unconscionable attack on the processes that are supposed to defend the rights and liberties of Canadians and to defend good decision-making. How can the minister, if he really thinks this is a good bill, justify the most draconian use of shutting down a procedure that we have ever seen in the House, shutting it down not just at one stage but at all stages, with no possibility for debate, study or amendment?

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, I am stumped by the actions we just saw in the House from Conservatives, trying to adjourn the House for the day. They just voted to adjourn the House, but fortunately a majority of us are here to do the work and continue with the business of the House. We voted that adjournment motion down.

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We welcome the debate, in the case of this bill, to advance the work on housing supply. Housing is in a crisis across Canada, and we need to make sure affordability is paramount. The bill is about investing \$1.7 billion in provinces and territories to boost their housing supply. It is a very simple, straightforward bill. There have been hours of debate on it. We can contrast that opportunity for members to speak to the bill with what happened yesterday in the House, when the Conservative member for Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford filibustered for hours, preventing many other members from being able to speak in the debate in the House. I know there are lots of games being played around adjournment and filibustering.

The bill is about getting funding to the people on the ground in our country who need affordable housing.

• (1705)

Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister already mentioned in the discussion today that we are in a housing crisis. He spoke earlier about the fact that buyers cannot buy and builders cannot build. I would agree with that. I would add that people who are looking to sell also cannot sell during this housing crisis. However, of course, we are in a housing crisis after 11 years of Liberal policies that have brought in more bureaucracies, higher spending and higher inflation that have driven up the cost of living and doubled the cost of housing for Canadians right across the country. That is why we are in this housing crisis.

Now that the Liberals are bringing forward more spending, more bureaucracy and more of the same, how are Canadians supposed to believe that the Liberals are going to get us out of this housing crisis that they caused, with more policies that are right along the lines of the policies that caused this crisis in the first place?

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to our predecessors here in the House, there is about 40 years of history of the Government of Canada's neglecting to invest enough in affordable housing. That is what has created the housing crisis today. It has been built up over decades by governments of all stripes. There have been lots of challenges from the local, provincial and territorial levels in not expediting and not approving housing. The challenges have mounted over many years.

The government has now been elected to take action. That is what advancing the bill is about: to make sure we are investing, working collaboratively with provinces and territories to get housing built and to get the housing market going again. I know that the opposition housing critic has been very vocal about supporting getting the housing market going. Ontario and B.C. are two of the provinces that are really challenged on housing supply and market. We need to get this money invested on the ground as quickly as possible.

Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the minister explain how Bill C-26 is part of the overall housing plan in this country, which Canadians are expecting?

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-26 would be one tool in a large tool box that we need to activate to get the housing market turned around here in Canada, to get more affordable housing built, to make sure we have a healthy housing market and to make sure the homebuilding industry is innovating and advancing

to make housing more affordable. This would be one tool in collaboration with the provinces and territories. It would be a direct investment, a transfer, and would give them the flexibility to apply it where needed.

Ontario is choosing to eliminate its HST for this year, which I think is having a very positive effect on the market in Ontario. Other provinces and territories would have different approaches depending on their markets, but we have many other tools from Build Canada Homes and reaching home, which is supporting homelessness efforts, to the housing accelerator fund, which works with communities and local governments to cut red tape and get housing built.

We have a wide array of tools. We need to continue scaling up the work on those tools, scaling up the investment that is needed to ensure that we have enough affordable housing being built, and to make sure that as a House we are here supporting the efforts and collaboration with all levels of government and the private sector.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have lost track of the number of times I have stood in the House in the last few days to talk about the government's again ramming a bill through the House. In this case, the bill has not had the benefit of second reading, committee study, third reading or report stage. It has not been to the Senate. It has not had the benefit of being studied in either House. It concerns an extremely important area of policy and law in this country, and we have seen the unintended consequences of badly drafted Liberal bills being rammed through the House.

We saw it with Bill C-3, wherein there are unintended consequences, including lots of Americans who are discovering their connections to Canada. We have seen it with the minister's actions when he was the mayor of Vancouver. This is an area that we have to get right, and I would urge the government not to do this. I would challenge the minister to explain why Canadians should not get the benefit of debate on the bill.

• (1710)

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, if the members of the opposition are so insistent on debate time, why did they just vote to adjourn the House in the middle of the day on a Tuesday? It does not add up.

The bill is all about focusing on delivering results for the housing market, particularly in the member opposite's province, where I live too, B.C. The housing market in metro Vancouver is extremely challenged right now. The Province of B.C. would have the opportunity to deploy this funding to get the province's market going. That is an example. I think we have seen that already happen with Ontario as the first mover taking action to eliminate its HST.

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We need to get this funding out to communities. That is the priority. It is a very simple and straightforward bill about collaborating, investing in our provinces and territories and making sure that housing is built across Canada.

Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I find most troubling about this particular bill is that it is not too dissimilar from the government's Build Canada Homes creation, an agency created with \$13 billion, with zero targets, zero metrics and no transparency. Nobody knows how it is really supposed to work or what it is going to do. It is just going to do non-market housing.

The bill before us would involve \$1.713 billion that the minister could spend at his whim. There is nothing in the bill about what the metrics would be nor what the housing needs are by province. It is just \$1.713 billion, and the Minister of Finance could spend it however he chooses on housing supply. There would be no requirement for him to talk to the Minister of Housing. There would be no requirement for him to understand CMHC data on the need by province. It is nothing. It would just be a blank cheque for the Minister of Finance.

The House is responsible for the public purse. Why would there be no scrutiny of the \$1.713 billion?

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, I think we need to look at what is happening in the member opposite's province. Ontario has been first out of the gate, accepting this funding and deploying it to eliminate the HST, for which members opposite have been calling for months, to take action. I think both sides of the House agree we need to take action to get the housing market going in Ontario and B.C., where it has been stalled. This has done that in Ontario. Ontario is a good example of making a good choice to eliminate the HST for this year and prime the pump on its housing market. That is an example of what we want to see across the country.

We would not be prescriptive with provinces and territories. We would be responsive to the needs across the country. We want to be sure that Ontario and B.C. markets are addressed, as they are in a state of relative crisis, but we want to have flexibility with this too. It is a very simple next step and a statement of collaboration with provinces and territories that we would entrust them to do the right thing and take action to deliver on housing.

Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has been good at announcing programs, dollars and funds, but it is really blank on the details. I am wondering if the minister knows what codes are on the first nations themselves and if he is going to invest from the public purse into first nation homes. There is a shortage of 157,000 homes, and the national building codes and provincial codes do not apply on first nations.

What codes will he be building to when investing this money from the public purse in first nations?

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, the investment in housing for first nations on reserve is something the Minister of Indigenous Services is responsible for. She currently has an indigenous housing process going to build a strategy, which I will be happy to collaborate with her on. There is indigenous housing funding as well in Build Canada Homes that is focused on urban, rural and northern indigenous housing, which is about a \$4-billion envelope.

There are a number of different opportunities for indigenous housing.

With this housing supply bill, we are talking about \$1.7 billion to the provinces and territories, giving them the discretion to deploy that funding as needed. Some may choose to work with indigenous populations to invest that money on housing. That is their choice.

● (1715)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, back in the day, Peter Van Loan sat a couple of desks in front of me. That was when the current leader of the Conservative Party participated in programming motions. They brought motions like what we have today well over 100 times. Earlier this year, we even saw Conservatives vote in favour of time allocation, or a motion of this nature, because they recognized that Bill C-5 was an important piece of legislation.

It seems that the Conservatives have supported the need for time allocation and programming. Given their recent filibustering behaviour, in order to get this over the goal line and build on Canadian homes, having these measures is really important.

I am wondering if the minister would provide his thoughts on working collaboratively with provinces and other stakeholders and on how important it is that the federal government take the lead, which is exactly what we are doing with the passage of this bill.

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, on process, I have spoken to the urgency and simplicity of this bill in entrusting provinces and territories with taking action and deploying this funding to get housing supply scaled up in their jurisdictions. As we have seen with Ontario eliminating the HST, we already have a good example of what can be done.

I think the collaboration piece is really critical here. We do rely upon provinces and territories. A member opposite had a question about building codes. There are attempts to harmonize on or to have a smoother flow for the supply chains for homebuilding materials, Canadian materials in particular, and for labour, workers and expertise across the country. We want the provinces and territories working on team Canada to get more housing built.

I think it is really critical that, right now, we are investing across the board to facilitate more housing getting built and more inter-change between provinces and territories to get that done.

S. O. 57

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, in response to what the parliamentary secretary just said, it is important for Canadians to know that there is a big difference between using closure or time allocation at one stage of a bill in the House and shutting the bill down at every stage so there is no possibility of committee study. On Bill C-5, we moved it forward, but we had detailed committee study and amendments from the Conservatives that improved that bill. In this case, the bill is being shut down at all stages with no committee study, no report stage and no third reading debate.

I think it is because, in part, the housing minister is afraid to come to the human resources committee, where we sit—

An hon member: Oh, oh!

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the member is blowing that off.

I will ask the minister a simple question. This motion is going to pass; they have their majority, so it is going to pass. Will the minister agree to come to the human resources committee, even for one hour, to talk to us about the bill?

The human resources committee is supposed to be studying housing. We have two studies going, one on housing starts and one on homelessness. We have not heard from the minister. We also have this bill going through on housing. The minister is trying to skip coming to committee. Will he come to human resources committee for an hour to talk about this bill, yes or no?

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite well knows that I have appeared before HUMA a number of times to talk about the initiatives we have, as a government, to get affordable housing going, to get Build Canada Homes up and running as a Crown corporation so that it can drive the pace in getting affordable housing built. I have been at HUMA. I have been at other committees as well to make sure we are doing everything we can to advance the work on affordable housing. I will certainly be in front of HUMA again many more times as the housing minister.

What we are talking about with this bill is advancing it so we can accelerate, so we can invest in the provinces and territories to get housing supply boosted across Canada right now. It is very simple and straightforward. Members opposite may not want to support investing in provinces and territories. They may not want to invest \$1.7 billion in scaling up housing supply. This is an opportunity to say yes to that, and I encourage the members—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to cut the minister off to allow time for more questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Lady-smith.

• (1720)

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, we have heard a variety of arguments from this side of the House as to why cutting debate off on this bill is short-sighted, but perhaps one of the most important reasons is because, as my hon. colleague explained, it does not just cut off debate in the House; it also means this bill will never go to committee. What that means is that the experts, the constituents, the members of civil society in this country who might have something to say with respect to this bill, which might actually be useful to the government, will not get the chance to be heard.

I certainly understand why the member does not want to go to committee. I have seen him there, and it is not good, but I want to know why the minister is also cutting off Canadians from having their say about the bill through our committee process.

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, again, I am a bit surprised to hear this commentary from the members opposite. We are in a housing crisis. We need to move urgently to solve this, to fix this. We need to work with our provinces and territories to do that. We rely on their leadership as well.

It is a simple question: Does she support investing \$1.7 billion, boosting housing supply with provinces and territories? The members opposite may not agree. It is a very simple next step to increase the federal government's investment in housing. This is what is before us right now. I encourage the members to support this so we can get this out as soon as possible and get housing built.

Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, the minister knows this because I met him when he first got elected here on the floor of the House of Commons, and when he was named the housing minister, I told him that the first thing he had to do was to get rid of the people who have led us into this trap in the first place. Those are the people in his department, the ones whose advice he is following now to spend another \$1.7 billion of Canadians' money in accomplishing what they have accomplished so far, which is just spending money and not fixing the situation at all.

He keeps referring to a crisis. This crisis is a crisis of his party's causing, along with the officials who have led him to this trap. Not getting this to committee means another \$1.7 billion of Canadian taxpayer money going out the door without anybody seeing what it is about, what the accountability mechanisms might be or if the money is being spent wisely. It is just another cheque that the minister is trying to bring in front of the Canadian people.

Will he please tell us if he is going to entertain any input on the accountability mechanism assigned to the \$1.7 billion of new taxpayer money?

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Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, well, I have a very simple question for the members opposite: Do they support working with the Government of Ontario to eliminate the HST for one year on new homes up to \$1 million?

This is exactly what Ontario is doing with the funding related to this housing supply bill. This is exactly what it is doing. It has committed the funding. If the members opposite support giving Ontarians a break on buying a new home up to \$1 million, with \$130,000 off \$1 million, that is what the bill is all about. This is what Ontario is doing. If the Conservatives vote against the bill, they are voting against giving people in Ontario a break on buying a new home and giving home builders in Ontario an opportunity to get more active and make sure they are driving up supply in Ontario. That is what this is about.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister reminding us what this bill is about. It is about working with provinces and territories and providing them with the levers to help Canadians. Even on a bill so simple, we hear the opposition talking about the importance of having debate and conversation. Anybody who has been observing committees has seen, whenever the opposition has an expert, a witness or a minister present, its members are busy talking about their pets, including all the way up to elephants.

It is interesting, because when the Conservatives have the opportunity to ask questions, to scrutinize and to actually be an effective opposition, they choose to spend time talking about anything but the legislation or what is in front of them. We see it here in the House as well. When people want us to work, when Canadians are hurting and want us to serve, the Conservatives cannot fathom the government succeeding in doing well for Canadians. They would rather keep advancing their narrative than help their own constituents, neighbours and fellow Canadians.

I would like to hear this from the minister: Why is it important that we get this legislation done, and what do we see as the potential outcomes? Why is it important that the government be able to deliver for Canadians?

• (1725)

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member. The importance of getting this done is urgent. Really, the example in Ontario is what we are working with. It shows the difference this can make on the ground for the housing market, homebuyers and home builders in Ontario, who need to get going on building more supply.

That is the result we are seeing already in Ontario. We met with developers over the last few weeks. The Prime Minister and I were told that we are seeing a 60% to 70% increase in sales volume here in Ottawa, and that is because of the Ontario HST elimination this year. Therefore, we are seeing a direct benefit of the Ontario partnership here.

I expect we will see this with provinces and territories across the country as this funding is approved and deployed. This is about collaboration and a partnership of trust. It is about getting the money to the communities and the people, ultimately, so they can buy homes.

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot about process from the minister and in the House as to why this bill should be closed for debate. However, what we and the industry have not heard from the minister is how many homes the \$1.7 billion that he wants to spend of taxpayer dollars is going to build. He has not answered that question, which is why we should continue to debate this.

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member opposite that we need to look at the Ontario example of how this funding is being used. The Ontario government has chosen to deploy it for eliminating the HST for this year to get its housing market going. Getting that housing market going by giving people a discount effectively on a new home is advancing the market. It is getting home builders back to building, because they know the market is coming back alive.

I have heard from the members opposite that this has been a crisis, particularly in the GTA, that is related to the housing market. This is how the Ontario government, in partnership with us and resourced by this housing supply bill, is getting that market going and getting homebuyers into homes more affordably.

We want to see that happen across the country. I know the provinces and territories have different approaches depending on their markets and their housing contexts. I am looking forward to seeing this deployed in B.C., in my home province, because the metro Vancouver market has very similar challenges to those of the GTA, and I want to see that change. We are receiving a lot of pressure from home builders who are concerned about the markets being flat. That is not surprising given the uncertainty in the world. This is a way to help jump-start and accelerate the markets and get more homes built.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we would request a recorded vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

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

S. O. 57
(Division No. 164)

YEAS

Members

Acan	Al Soud
Ali	Alty
Anand	Auguste
Bains	Baker
Bardeesy	Battiste
Beech	Begum
Belanger (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill Riv- er)	Bendayan
Bittle	Brière
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Champagne
Chang	Chartrand
Chatel	Chen
Chenette	Chi
Church	Clark
Connors	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dandurand	Danko
d'Entremont	Deschênes-Thériault
Desrochers	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Earle
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Eyolfson
Fancy	Fanjoy
Fergus	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Fry	Gainey
Gasparro	Gerretsen
Gladu	Gould
Grant	Greaves
Guay	Guilbeault
Gull-Masty	Hajdu
Hanley	Harrison
Hepfner	Hirtle
Hodgson	Hogan
Housefather	Hussen
Iacono	Idlout
Jaczek	Jeneroux
Joseph	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Klassen	Koutrakis
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)	Lapointe (Sudbury)
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lavack	Lavoie
Leitão	Lightbound
Long	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Ma	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacDonald (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Malette (Bay of Quinte)	Maloney
Martin	McKelvie
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McKnight
McLean (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke)	Ménard
Mendès	Michel
Miedema	Miller
Mingarelli	Morrissey
Myles	Naqvi
Nathan	Nguyen
Noormohamed	Ntumba
Oliphant	Olszewski
O'Rourke	Osborne
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Provost	Ramsay
Rana	Robertson
Rocheffort	Romanado

Royer
Saini
Sari
Schiefke
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Solomon
St-Pierre
Tesser Derksen
Turnbull
van Koeverden
Villeneuve
Weiler
Yip
Zerucelli

Sahota
Sarai
Sawatzky
Sgro
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sodhi
Sousa
Sudds
Thompson
Valdez
Vandenbeld
Watchorn
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi— 164

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Anderson
Arnold
Baber
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu

Berthold
Blanchette-Joncas
Bonin
Borrelli
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Chambers
Chong
Cody
Dalton
Davidson
Davies (Niagara South)
DeBellefeuille
DeRidder
Diotte
Dowdall
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Garon
Gazan
Gill (Calgary Skyview)
Gill (Calgary McKnight)
Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)
Goodridge
Groleau
Gunn
Hardy
Hoback
Jackson
Jivani
Khanna
Kirkland
Konanz
Kramp-Neuman
Kwan
Lantsman
Lawrence
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Mahal
Malette (Kapusking—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)
Martel

Aitchison
Allison
Anstey
Au
Bailey
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt)
Bexte
Block
Bonk
Boulerice
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Champoux
Cobena
Cooper
Dancho
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dawson
Deltell
Deschênes
Doherty
Duncan
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)
Fortin
Gaudreau
Genuis
Gill (Brampton West)
Gill (Windsor West)
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)

Gourde
Guglielmin
Hallan
Ho
Holman
Jansen
Johns
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Larouche
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Lemire
Lewis (Essex)
Lloyd
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Mantle
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Mazier
McLean (Calgary Centre)
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Reid
Reynolds
Roberts
Ross
Ruff
Scheer
Seeback
Small
Ste-Marie
Strahl
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Uppal
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McCauley
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Steinley
Stevenson
Strauss
Thomas
Tolmie
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Warkentin
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PAIRED

Members

Anandasangaree
Blois
Gaheer
Godin
Kelly
Lalonde
McGuinty
Plamondon

Bezan
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Gallant
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Shipley— 16

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON SICKLE CELL DISEASE ACT

The House resumed from April 17 consideration of the motion that Bill S-201, An Act respecting a national framework on sickle cell disease, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I first want to take a few moments to acknowledge a tragedy that deeply shook my region, the Lower St. Lawrence, yesterday morning. A major fire ravaged the Fibel et fils farm in Saint-Éloi in Les Basques RCM. Our thoughts are with the Fillion family and the entire team at Fibel et fils farm, who have been deeply affected by this tragedy. The farm lost its herd and the result of 45 years of hard work, which is a huge challenge for them.

Beyond the material losses, the loss of these animals, which farmers care for and pay attention to every day, makes this situation even more heartbreaking. Behind every farm is a family, generations of work, expertise that is passed down from generation to generation and a vital contribution to our food security. Thankfully, no lives were lost.

Private Members' Business

I also want to recognize the remarkable work of the firefighters who made it possible to protect the neighbouring buildings in spite of particularly difficult conditions. I want to express my solidarity with the Fillion family, their loved ones and the entire agricultural community that was affected by this event. In the Lower St. Lawrence, when one of our own is struck by a tragedy, the entire community comes together.

Our hearts go out to them at this particularly challenging time.

Returning to the subject at hand, I would like to speak to Bill S-201, which aims to establish a national framework for sickle cell disease. I want to begin by saying that the Bloc Québécois recognizes that this is a serious condition and that it is important to raise awareness about this reality. We also acknowledge the remarkable work of those living with the condition, their caregivers, organizations and health care professionals who support them on a daily basis. I would also like to highlight the work of Senator Marie-Françoise Mégie, who has championed this bill with determination in order to raise awareness of a condition that is still all too often misunderstood by the general public.

Sickle cell disease is a chronic genetic condition that affects red blood cells and can lead to severe pain, serious complications and a reduced life expectancy. In Canada, nearly 6,000 people are affected by this condition. It is of particular concern to people of African and Caribbean descent, but also certain populations in the Middle East, South-East Asia and South America. It is therefore entirely legitimate to seek to raise awareness, improve support for those affected and promote research. Moreover, as Professor Jude Mary Cénat, director of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Black Health, pointed out, Bill S-201 addresses decades-long neglect of a disease that remains far too little understood.

That said, the Bloc Québécois believes that the government must respect the division of powers when addressing this issue. Health care falls exclusively under the jurisdiction of Quebec. Several aspects of the bill directly affect responsibilities that already belong to the Government of Quebec. These include the training of health care professionals, the establishment of national standards for diagnosis and treatment, and public awareness campaigns. Quebec has always been clear. It intends to remain the lead authority on public health policies within its territory.

Quebec did not wait for Ottawa to take action. Quebec has already developed its own screening model, its own clinical tools, and its own network of expertise to support people with sickle cell disease. When a province already has the programs, expertise, and infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of its population, a national framework should recognize this reality rather than seek to standardize approaches. Sickle cell disease is already part of Quebec's neonatal blood screening program. An improved version of this program has been in place since April 2025 to enable faster and more accurate screening for all newborns.

Quebec's ministry of health and social services has also developed several guides, best practices, and tools for health care professionals. Families also have access to educational resources to help them better understand the disease and the available treatments.

Private Members' Business

Quebec already has recognized expertise and a set of measures tailored to its reality. That is why we are concerned that Bill S-201 does not more fully recognize Quebec's unique characteristics. We believe that the federal government should focus on areas that fall squarely within its jurisdiction, rather than trying to impose national standards in an area for which it has neither management responsibility nor accountability for the consequences.

● (1815)

That does not mean that Ottawa has no responsibility, on the contrary. The problem is not a lack of national strategies. Rather, the problem is that Ottawa too often gets involved in areas that are outside its jurisdiction, while neglecting some of its own responsibilities. If Ottawa really wants to help improve care, it should start by adequately funding health care. The federal government was originally supposed to cover about 50% of health care costs. Today, its actual contribution is closer to 22%. The real problem is not a lack of national strategies, but rather a lack of funding.

Before creating more national frameworks, Ottawa should start by meeting its financial commitments to Quebec. Quebec does not need a new federal national framework. What it needs is the federal government to respect its jurisdiction, increase health transfers and do its part. The federal government already funds research through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. If it wants to make a difference, then it should make sure that sickle cell research is supported. Several stakeholders have pointed out that this disease has long received less attention and funding than other comparable genetic diseases.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research already has the tools it needs to support researchers, promote scientific breakthroughs and improve treatments for patients. That is where the federal government should focus its efforts rather than trying to intervene in the organization of Quebec's health network.

As for the data collection mechanisms set out in the bill, they will have to comply with Quebec's areas of jurisdiction and applicable privacy rules. The federal government should also look at its own programs to better meet the needs of people with sickle cell disease. I am thinking in particular of tax credits for caregivers and disability benefits. Some serious forms of the disease lead to significant limitations, and it is entirely reasonable to ensure that people who are affected can fully benefit from existing federal programs.

We also believe that the federal government needs to be realistic when it comes to public drug plans. They fall under Quebec's areas of jurisdiction, and Quebec already has its own plan. It is therefore up to Quebec to determine which drugs and treatments it covers. Once again, Ottawa should first ensure that its own programs adequately meet the needs of the people affected rather than trying to intervene in areas outside its jurisdiction.

Ultimately, the question is not whether we should support people with sickle cell disease. Obviously the answer to that is "yes". The real question is how to do it effectively. For the Bloc Québécois, the answer is simple. The government needs to fully respect Quebec's powers, increase health transfers and shoulder the responsibilities that truly fall to Ottawa.

Quebec did not wait around for this bill in order to take action. It already screens for the disease, supports families, backs health care professionals and contributes to the advancement of scientific knowledge. Therefore, we hope that any measure arising from this national framework will be implemented with Quebec's consent and in full respect of its powers.

Let us help patients. Let us support families. Let us promote research. However, let us not use patients' suffering as a pretext to further centralize health care decisions. It is in this spirit that we wish to see the bill amended so that it fully recognizes Quebec's responsibilities and the work it is already doing.

● (1820)

[English]

Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague from Scarborough—Woburn for sponsoring this important bill, alongside the work of former senator Marie-Françoise Mégie and Senator Tony Ince in the Senate. Their leadership has helped bring national attention to an issue that matters deeply to many Canadians: how we better support people living with sickle cell disease, their families and their caregivers.

It is important for me to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill S-201, an act respecting a national framework on sickle cell disease. Sickle cell disease is one of the most common genetic conditions in the world. In Canada, it affects an estimated 5,000 people. For those living with the disease, the impact can be serious and lifelong. It can mean repeated hospital visits, chronic pain, blood transfusions, complex treatments and ongoing challenges for families and caregivers. That is why the legislation is so important.

Bill S-201 would develop a national framework to support Canadians living with sickle cell disease. It would also require Health Canada to consult broadly, including with provinces and territories, health care professionals, researchers, indigenous people, patient groups, community organizations, families and caregivers. This is the right approach. Health care is delivered across jurisdictions, and improving support for people living with sickle cell disease requires coordination, evidence, awareness and collaboration.

I know the Canadian Peace and Unity Organization is also doing sessions to raise awareness. Many other organizations are working so hard. The bill would help advance that work.

Private Members' Business

The national framework proposed in Bill S-201 would look at several important areas. It would support better health professional training, help establish national research networks and patient registries, encourage more consistent diagnostic and treatment pathways and support expanded newborn screening. These are practical measures that can make a real difference. A national registry, for example, could help us better understand how many Canadians are living with sickle cell disease, what their needs are and where support could be improved. Research networks could help strengthen evidence, support innovation and connect experts across the country. Standardized diagnostic and treatment pathways could help ensure that patients receive timely and appropriate care no matter where they live. Expanded newborn screening could support earlier diagnosis, earlier intervention and better long-term outcomes.

Bill S-201 would also build on important work that is already under way. Our government launched the national strategy for drugs for rare diseases to improve access to effective drugs for rare diseases and make them more affordable for patients across Canada. The strategy focuses on supporting patient outcomes, investing in innovation, seeking national consistency and collecting and using evidence. As part of this work, the federal government has signed bilateral funding agreements with all 13 provinces and territories. These agreements are helping improve coverage and access to selected new drugs for rare diseases, other new and existing drugs, screening and diagnostic services and better data collection. This is an important step for Canadians living with rare diseases, including those living with sickle cell disease.

The strategy is also supporting work with important research partners, including the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Canada's drug agency and the Canadian Institute for Health Information. Through this work, Canada is strengthening research on gene therapies, diagnostic tools, administrative data, monitoring, pediatric clinic trials and treatment networks. These investments matter because rare diseases often affect smaller patient populations, which can make evidence harder to collect and treatment harder to access. By improving how we collect data, support research and make decisions, we are helping build a more consistent and informed system for patients across the country.

• (1825)

Bill S-201 would complement this work by focusing specifically on sickle cell disease. It would help ensure that the condition receives national attention through a coordinated framework, clear reporting requirements and continuing collaborations with the people and organizations who understand the disease best.

The legislation would also build on previous federal action. In 2017, Parliament recognized June 19 as National Sickle Cell Awareness Day, helping bring greater national attention to this condition and the experiences of those affected by it. Bill S-201 would take that work further by moving from awareness toward a coordinated national framework for research, screening, treatment and support.

Another important area is blood donation. Many people living with sickle cell disease require blood transfusions as part of their care. These transfusions are often most effective when the blood is closely matched. That is why efforts to increase the diversity of

Canada's blood donor base are so important. Canadian Blood Services has worked to increase awareness and encourage more donors from communities where matched blood is most needed. This work helps strengthen the blood supply and supports patients who depend on safe and closely matched blood. Bill S-201 would help keep these needs on the national agenda as part of a broader conversation about care, treatment, research and support.

The bill would also recognize the real and ongoing costs that families can face. Living with sickle cell disease can affect work, school, family life and financial stability. Caregivers also carry significant responsibilities, including attending appointments, supporting treatments and helping loved ones manage the daily realities of the condition. That is why this legislation would call for an examination of possible supports, including a tax credit for people living with sickle cell disease and their caregivers. This is an important recognition that not only do health conditions affect medical care, but they also affect the everyday lives of patients and families.

The bill would also ask the government to examine eligibility for disability benefits and the inclusion of essential sickle cell treatments in public drug plans. These are important conversations, and they deserve thoughtful study.

I want to recognize the advocates, researchers, health care professionals and community organizations that have carried this work forward for many years. In particular, I want to acknowledge the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario and commend its advocacy. Its advocacy and community leadership have helped to support families, raise awareness and push this issue onto the national agenda.

Bill S-201 would reflect many of the priorities that advocates have called for, including stronger research, better data, improved screening, health professional training and more consistent care for patients. It would also build on the work already under way through the national strategy for drugs for rare diseases, National Sickle Cell Awareness Day, investments in research and efforts to strengthen blood donor diversity.

Private Members' Business

For families in Peel region and across the country who have long advocated for better awareness for caregivers who carry daily responsibilities and for Canadians living with sickle cell disease, this legislation represents meaningful progress. That is why I am proud to support it.

• (1830)

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak today about Bill S-201, an act respecting a national framework on sickle cell disease.

Sickle cell disease is a devastating inherited blood disorder. It causes chronic pain, organ damage, serious infections and a shortened life expectancy. Our best estimates suggest that 6,000 Canadians are living with sickle cell disease right now. I say “estimates” deliberately because Canada has no coordinated data to tell us the actual number. We cannot track outcomes or evaluate treatments at scale or measure whether what we are doing is actually working. Without the data, it is nearly impossible to plan health care services, allocate resources appropriately or understand the full impact this disease has on patients and families.

The Conservatives are proud to stand up for Canadians living with sickle cell disease. We were proud to vote in favour of recognizing June 19 as National Sickle Cell Awareness Day. This bill would build on that commitment by including measures to support public awareness campaigns and increase blood donation. We have also committed to implementing a rare disease strategy to support treatment development, and we have fought to safely speed up drug approvals for treatments already approved by peer jurisdictions.

Let me explain what the bill would do. Bill S-201 would require the Minister of Health to develop and table a national framework on sickle cell disease within one year. That framework must cover nine substantive areas. These are health care professionals' training, a national research network and patient registry, evidence-based national standards for diagnosis and treatment, universal neonatal screening, public awareness campaigns, promoting blood donations to ensure diversity in the blood supply, the analysis of the potential tax credit for patients and caregivers, the inclusion of sickle cell disease in existing disability benefits and an analysis of the inclusion of sickle cell treatments in public drug insurance plans.

The government would be required to table a follow-up implementation report within three years. The bill would also require the minister to consult with relevant colleagues, the provinces and territories, patients, caregivers, the medical community and researchers.

There are provisions in this legislation that warrant careful scrutiny at committee. Let me start with what may be the most straightforward and most urgent piece of this bill, which is neonatal screening. Early detection saves lives. When sickle cell disease is caught at birth, families and clinicians can begin managing the condition before the first crisis. When we do not detect sickle cell disease early, children can suffer devastating complications that could have been prevented, like strokes, infections and organ damage. As of August 2024, universal newborn screening is already implemented in every province and territory, except Newfoundland and Labrador and Nunavut. The gap is real, but it is narrow. Rather than designing a sweeping national mandate, the more effective approach would be to ask what specific barriers are preventing imple-

mentation. I am looking forward to seeking clarity on the scope and potential models for neonatal screening at committee.

Let me turn to some concerns about provincial jurisdiction. Health care delivery is and must remain the primary responsibility of the provinces. The Conservatives believe any federal health framework must be developed in partnership with the provinces and should not be handed down as a federal directive. The bill requires consultation, and that is welcome, but consultation is not partnership. We have seen too many federal health initiatives that check the consultation box and then proceed, regardless of what the provinces said. This framework must be built with the provinces, not around them.

The bill proposes setting what it calls “evidence-based national standards for the diagnosis and treatment of sickle cell disease”. On the surface, it sounds sensible, but the standards of care in this country are established by medical professional associations operating under provincial and territorial jurisdiction. Any attempt by the federal government to unilaterally define those standards without meaningful provincial engagement would be both constitutionally questionable and practically counterproductive.

• (1835)

We have seen how to do this well. Bill C-442, the Lyme disease framework from the 41st Parliament in 2013, focused on establishing shared guidelines, promoting best practices and encouraging knowledge sharing, not dictating clinical standards from Ottawa. The framework for cancers linked to firefighting took a similar approach with recommendations, information sharing and recognition of occupational diseases. These models work precisely because they respect jurisdictional boundaries while still advancing national coordination. Bill S-201 should follow the same template.

The Conservatives want to ensure that our health legislation properly reflects the advisory nature of federal clinical guidance and reduces the risk of jurisdictional intrusion. Conservatives are also concerned about the accountability measures of this bill, or the lack thereof. The framework would cover nine major action areas spread across multiple organizations, but it has no clear assignment of responsibility or an enforcement mechanism. A framework that is so broad and unenforceable is simply a list of aspirations.

Private Members' Business

Canadians with sickle cell disease want results, not platitudes. It would be beneficial for the health committee to consider clear accountability mechanisms. These could include identifying who is responsible for each deliverable, what the timeline is and how Canadians will know whether the commitments are being met.

I also want to raise a concern that does not get enough attention in these debates, which is the cost. This bill does not include fiscal appropriation, which is standard for a private member's bill. However, it directs the government to study programs that have the potential to carry costs. A national research network would need dedicated infrastructure, staff and long-term operational support. Universal neonatal screening would need provincial buy-in and funding commitments. Public awareness campaigns would need sustained investment to reach the communities most affected. Health professionals' training would need a curriculum, coordination across medical schools and resources to deliver it. An analysis of a potential tax credit for individuals with sickle cell disease and their caregivers would need rigorous actuarial work. Expanding disability benefits to include sickle cell disease would carry fiscal implications that must be modelled before any commitments are made. Each of these programs would have a large price tag associated with them. Canadians deserve to know what these costs would be before this framework is finalized, yet no cost estimate from the Parliamentary Budget Officer has accompanied this bill. I have written to the Parliamentary Budget Officer to request one, and hope this is conducted for the committee's consideration.

Costs and structure are not the only things we need to ask questions about. We must also consider what treatment options are available to Canadians living with sickle cell disease.

Gene therapies that were once in the realm of science fiction are now a reality. In late 2023, both the United Kingdom and the United States approved Casgevy, a groundbreaking gene therapy, and the U.S. went further in improving a second option, Lyfgenia, at the same time, so there are two options. Canada approved Casgevy nearly a full year later, and Lyfgenia is still not available to Canadian patients.

Once Health Canada approves a treatment, the wait is not over. Canadians on public insurance plans face a wait, on average, of three years from the time a drug is approved elsewhere to the time they can actually access it. That is insane. That is roughly one year in Health Canada's approval process, followed by two more years of provincial coverage negotiations through the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance. It is absolutely insane that people would have to wait three years while they are in pain, their organs are being damaged and other countries' patients are receiving treatment. The Conservatives have committed to fixing this. If the therapy has already cleared rigorous regulatory review in peer jurisdictions, we should not be making Canadian patients wait years to access the same medicine.

• (1840)

We have proposed safely accelerating approval for treatments already approved by peer jurisdictions. To be clear, our approach to rare diseases is not simply about drugs.

I guess my time is up.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and acknowledge a very important piece of legislation. During private members' hour, we are afforded the opportunity to prioritize issues that are important to individual members of Parliament. I know my colleague and friend from Scarborough—Woburn has identified this and is working collaboratively with the Senate not only to raise the profile of an important issue, but also to see action taken. I commend and compliment him for doing so.

I understand that we have the president of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada on Parliament Hill. At times, I am sure it can be a very lonely job, so I appreciate the advocacy that is absolutely essential to ensure that governments at whatever level, whether it is the national level or the provincial level, move forward on issues such as this. When we think of rare diseases, there is always a need to have those advocates, because there is never enough attention given to those issues.

I have always found that the strongest and best advocate for someone who has a rare disease, such as sickle cell disease, is actually a parent. The sacrifices that parents and family members make in order to be there in a very real and tangible way for another family member, a spouse or someone who is significant in their life is absolutely critical. The support that individual needs is essential, because one can only imagine the pain, the agony and, at times, the feeling of helplessness, looking for answers and wondering why the government is not doing enough to help.

I approach this in a capacity of compassion from the days, many years ago, when I was the health critic in the Province of Manitoba. I know the challenges that are faced in relation to rare diseases. My daughter, who happens to be an MLA, often has the opportunity to deal with this issue.

Where I differ somewhat from the member of the Conservative Party is that I honestly believe there are opportunities for the federal government to play a stronger role. Whether we are in Newfoundland and Labrador, my home province of Manitoba or any other jurisdiction, we would like to think there is a basic standard of health care delivery that runs through for the public. People can look to the Canada Health Act as something that is there to provide a sense of comfort. For the most part, it does.

Private Members' Business

There is one major area that the government needs to improve upon, and that is dealing with rare diseases. Sickle cell disease is one of those. Through my friend, the member for Scarborough—Woburn, who has educated me on the issue to a certain degree, I understand that the number of people affected is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 5,000 to 7,000, but we really do not know the actual number. That, in itself, says something. That is, in all likelihood, a best guess. How accurate is it? Based on a bit of the debate that I have been listening to, I suspect that there is room for a great deal of improvement.

I am encouraged, based on what I am hearing, that we will see the legislation ultimately pass and get to the committee stage. Many questions will no doubt be posed.

● (1845)

My colleague from Manitoba made reference to the cost factor, but when we think of the cost factor, we also have to think in terms of the cost of not taking action, because in many ways the disease is debilitating. It is a disease that ultimately cuts a life short, and it causes all sorts of other issues, from missing work to an individual's having to live through the pain and discomfort. There are also the indirect costs for individuals who are living with someone with this disease, and the impact that has on them. These costs also need to be taken into consideration. Through technology and advancement, are there ways, if we invest at the front end, that the long-term costs would be that much less?

When the bill does go to committee, I would strongly encourage members, when they deal with the costs, to also deal with the costs of not taking action. In factoring in the costs of not taking action, we also have to factor in the individual. I would like to think that Canada is a very compassionate, caring society. We have a health care system. We want people, as much as possible, to have good-quality health care. Where it is possible, we want to deliver on the rare disease file.

The federal government works with provinces on health care. It has a responsibility. It is a shared jurisdiction. The provinces, generally speaking, administer health care services, consider drugs and medications, and put them on their list, whereas Health Canada will deem them to be safe, if I can put it that way. At the end of the day, Ottawa has the Canada Health Act and provides a great deal of money in support of our health care system.

We also established a fund that goes into the hundreds of millions of dollars, which is there to encourage provincial jurisdictions to acquire the types of medications, where they can, that would help deal with this disease. This is something that, even with the changes taking place in terms of the national budget, we have prioritized, because the Prime Minister has been very clear in making the statement that we want to preserve and expand, where we can, the health care services we provide to Canadians, if not directly then indirectly through provinces. That is why it is important we work collaboratively with provinces.

The essence of the legislation before us is to establish a framework. I would suggest that, by establishing a framework, there would be opportunities for education within the medical profession, for looking at best practices across Canada and for incorporating those best practices, such as when we were talking about the issue

of newborn testing and the diagnostics of newborn testing. I was encouraged that, while not all provinces have it, from what I understand, the vast majority do.

Establishing and putting together a framework would consider the situation and the reality we are facing today. It means going to committee and inviting some of the stakeholders, such as one I pointed out, The Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada, to consider submitting a written presentation, and possibly having in-person representation, so members of Parliament of all political stripes would have a much better understanding of the need for the federal government to play a role and of how a framework could actually be of benefit to all of Canada.

● (1850)

I am glad the member brought the legislation forward. I look forward to its passage to committee.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill S-201, the national framework on sickle cell disease act. The bill deals with a serious, painful and lifelong illness. Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disorder that affects hemoglobin. It can cause chronic pain, severe infections, organ damage, stroke and shortened life expectancy. It affects roughly 6,000 Canadians.

Bill S-201 would require the Minister of Health to develop and table a national framework on sickle cell disease within one year. The framework would cover training for health care professionals, a national research network and registry, evidence-based national standards, universal neonatal screening, public awareness, blood donation promotion, analysis of a possible tax credit, inclusion in existing disability benefits, and an analysis of whether treatments should be included in public drug insurance plans. A follow-up implementation report would be required within three years. These are serious proposals, some of which are partially implemented or implemented in various provinces. They deserve careful study.

Conservatives supported the recognition of June 19 as National Sickle Cell Awareness Day. We support better awareness, earlier diagnosis, improved screening, and stronger care for Canadians living with sickle cell disease. We support practical steps that help patients and families, especially when those steps are shaped by evidence and by the people most affected.

At the same time, Parliament has a duty to get the details right. As we know, health care delivery is provincial. The provinces run hospitals, manage newborn screening and make many of the direct decisions that determine whether any patient, including those with sickle cell disease, receives care quickly, safely and close to home. A federal framework can be useful if it brings people together, improves data, shares best practices and supports better outcomes.

However, it is useless and can even be very damaging if it produces yet another Ottawa document written far from the people who must deliver care on the ground, without taking their needs into account. That is the difference between a framework that helps patients and families and one that sits on the shelf and gathers dust or, worse, is used as an excuse not to act.

When the bill goes to committee, Conservatives will seek to ensure that the structural framework discussed in it results in a strategy that would be developed in genuine and respectful partnership with the provinces and territories. Patients deserve the benefit of better coordination. If the federal government uses its convening power well and with intent, better coordination can yield better outcomes. Families need real answers, not announcements.

The same is true for cost. Bill S-201 would not include a fiscal appropriation, but the framework points to initiatives that could carry major downstream costs. A national research network, a patient registry, public awareness campaigns, professional training, expanded screening, drug coverage analysis, disability benefit inclusion and a possible tax credit all raise financial questions. Compassion requires honesty. Before this framework is finalized, Parliament should require a Parliamentary Budget Officer cost estimate. If the government is asking Canadians to support a national framework, it should be clear about the costs, timelines, responsibilities and expected results. That is not opposition to the bill. It is respect for the patients who are counting on it.

The bill would also connect with areas where Conservatives have already put forward practical policy. We have supported making the caregiver tax credit refundable. We have called for the disability tax credit to be streamlined and simplified, including automatic eligibility for related programs where appropriate. We have supported safer, faster access to drugs already approved by trusted peer jurisdictions, better pediatric drug data, and a rare disease strategy that supports treatment development. Those ideas matter here.

● (1855)

Patients and caregivers need systems that are simple, fair and practical. They do not need more paperwork, more overlapping programs or federal announcements that create confusion among departments, provinces and providers. They need care that works.

Bill S-201 raises this broader question, because it would not be the only bill of its kind. In Parliament, members and senators have brought forward several health-related bills on rare disease access, forced and coerced sterilization, heart failure, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, food allergies, women's health, brain injuries, ADHD, medical assistance in dying, natural health products, living organ donors, supervised consumption sites, and mental health.

Each of these bills speaks to a real concern and has its own patients, families, advocates, experts and evidence. Some deal with disease-specific frameworks. Some deal with treatment access. Some deal with criminal law protections. Some deal with long-neglected gaps in the system. Taken together, what these bills reveal is something the Liberal government should not be proud of: Canada's health care file is being patched, one private member's bill at a time.

Private Members' Business

Private members' bills do have an important role. They can raise issues government has missed, bring neglected voices to Parliament or force attention where attention is overdue, but in this quantity, they show that they are becoming a substitute for a competent government that actually cares about the health of Canadians. A well-run health file would not need Parliament to keep discovering one gap after another through separate private members' bills. It would not need one bill for one disease, another for another treatment pathway, another for one group of patients and another for one failure that should have been addressed years ago.

The federal government has a Minister of Health, departments, agencies, regulators, health transfers, data systems and provincial-federal tables. It has the tools to lead while respecting provincial jurisdiction, yet again and again, patients and families are left to organize, to advocate and to wait until someone brings forward a bill. Canadians deserve better than fragmented attention on the health file. They deserve a health care approach that identifies gaps before families have to plead for help. They deserve better data, faster diagnosis, clearer accountability, responsible spending and practical support for provinces and territories. In short, they deserve federal leadership that knows the difference between coordination and interference.

For Bill S-201, we will work with the government to move the bill forward in a constructive way. We will support better awareness of sickle cell disease, earlier diagnosis, better data, stronger research, improved training for health care professionals and a more diverse blood supply. We would listen to patients, caregivers, clinicians, researchers, community organizations and provinces and territories when they come to committee, but we would also insist on amendments that would make the bill clearer and more useful.

The framework should be developed in partnership with provinces and territories. It should respect jurisdiction, avoid duplicating the existing national strategy for drugs and rare diseases, use accurate language around guidelines and best practices, include cost transparency and, most of all, be judged by whether it improves care.

Government Orders

People living with sickle cell disease do not need Parliament to pass bills that feel good but change little. This debate must result in more than just another report for the Ottawa shelves. Canadians deserve better, which is what Conservatives will continue to relentlessly fight for in the House.

• (1900)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The member for Scarborough—Woburn has five minutes for his right of reply.

Michael Coteau (Scarborough—Woburn, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of the people of Scarborough—Woburn and on behalf of families and patients across this country, people who have suffered from sickle cell. It is a great honour to channel their voice here in this great chamber.

We have heard a lot about paperwork. We have heard a lot about transparency. We have heard a lot about the mechanics of how government works. We have heard a lot about jurisdiction. I want to bring it back to the patient. I want to take a few moments to describe what a patient actually goes through when they are suffering from sickle cell.

I am not sure if members know how it works, but a cell moves through a blood vessel. It goes into smaller parts of the blood vessel, and when it does not get through, it starts to build up and cause pain. When I talk to an actual patient of sickle cell and ask them to describe how that pain feels, they say it is a throbbing, sharp, stabbing pain. It almost feels like their bones are being broken. It feels like they are being crushed. This is how they describe it. Sometimes it is a few days to two-plus weeks of pain, where their bones feel like they are being crushed. That is, of course, in a very severe case. It takes sometimes weeks to recover. People are just exhausted, and it takes away several weeks of their lives, because of the pain.

Historically, people who have suffered from sickle cell in this country and other countries around the world have been ignored. Sickle cell has been entangled with racism. There has been a lack of research applied to studying this particular disease and a lack of knowledge that doctors and people within the health care system have been provided. For people in Canada who have been waiting for services, when they go into an actual crisis, it is reported that they wait 25% longer, because the health care system cannot even identify, in many cases, what is wrong with them. This disease usually impacts people who have darker skin: people from the Middle East, people from the Caribbean, South Asians and people from Africa. As such, traditionally, it has been entangled with racism.

The interesting thing is that there are actually solutions. There is a cure for sickle cell. Here we are today, in Canada, where there is a disease impacting several thousand people, that we know of, and there is a cure, yet there are people in our system, Canadians, who are living with this disease. It is very difficult for them to work and it is very difficult for them to live normal lives, and they go through pain that is just unbelievable.

We have an opportunity here as members of Parliament, a unique opportunity. We have an opportunity to move this bill forward and send it to committee so we can discuss items like how we improve the system and how we look at the jurisdictional component. Of course the provinces and the territories are the ones that have juris-

diction over health care, but we have an opportunity as a House to provide leadership to help build a system right across this country to better the lives of so many Canadians.

I want to thank every single member in the House for their words today. I do believe we are all on the same page, and that page is to make sure that we do everything we can as members of Parliament in the House to protect and better the lives of all Canadians.

• (1905)

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

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

Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, I ask that it pass on division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Therefore, I declare the motion carried on division. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Health.

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

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to call it 7:11 p.m. at this time.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 11—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-26

The House resumed from June 11 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mirabel, the one they call “the MP with the golden voice”, just like little Joselito, and whom the people of Alto call “le député du petit train de l’amour”.

It is a pleasure to speak today to express the Bloc Québécois's support for Bill C-26. The Bloc Québécois has often advocated for an unconditional transfer of \$1.7 billion to the provinces and territories and that is what this bill provides. This money will go directly to the territories to address the major housing crisis we are currently facing, without going through any new structures. That is the best part, that this money is not going through new structures, action plans, or some sort of federal entity as we saw with Build Canada Homes.

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Not long ago, in fact, I rose to speak to Build Canada Homes. We quickly realized that although this initiative had its appeal, with \$7.3 billion to invest, it was slowing down social housing construction. I gave the example, in my riding, of a group called Loge m'entraide, which received funds from the SHQ, or Société d'habitation du Québec, for a major project, and was waiting for an answer about the federal government's contribution through the affordable housing fund. As often happens with federal initiatives, CMHC's affordable housing fund was set aside with assurances that a new initiative was on the way. The new initiative never materialized and had to be picked up by Build Canada Homes, with the result that the Loge m'entraide project is now in limbo.

However, that is not what we are seeing with Bill C-26. It provides a direct transfer to the provinces, as we have been calling for, rather than, as is often the case with the federal government, a proliferation of top-down structures and criteria imposed by Ottawa, without Ottawa necessarily being familiar with the specific challenges faced by the provinces and municipalities. We have said many times that the federal government should instead focus on straightforward, unconditional and predictable transfers to the provinces. That is what we are seeing with Bill C-26, I might add.

However, my job is certainly not to sing the government's praises, so I would like to take this opportunity to address a glaring problem: federal interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction. Why can I do this in the context of Bill C-26? Because it is, in a way, the exception that proves the rule. There is something glaringly obvious when we look at this bill and past legislation in the context of Canadian federalism. I do not need to talk about predatory federalism, which we have often seen and involves an encroachment on areas of jurisdiction, but there is something glaringly obvious in the fact that the federal government has repeatedly acted in an unjust and unfair manner when transferring funds.

This gives me an opportunity to once again address the most glaring injustice in the federation: the fiscal imbalance. We need to talk about this again because the reason the government can transfer \$1.7 billion dollars at this point is that it has the fiscal capacity to do so. It has that fiscal capacity because of the fiscal imbalance. It has more revenue than expenses. What I mean by the fiscal imbalance is quite simple. Virtually all of the public services governments are required to provide are delivered by the provinces and Quebec, yet the federal government's tax base allows it to collect 60% of the total tax revenue.

Essentially, the provinces and Quebec provide most of the services, such as education, health care and social programs, to name just a few, but the federal government's social mandate is typically limited to old age security benefits and family benefits. Note that employment insurance is not included because the employment insurance fund is not financed through taxation. It is funded by employers and workers.

- (1910)

The federal government has no social mission and a lot of revenue. The provinces and Quebec have a lot of social missions, a lot of spending and little revenue. That is the fiscal imbalance at work. That is why, year in and year out, over the past 10 to 15 years, the government has had to focus on transfer programs to the provinces.

These transfers were often accompanied by the federal government's involvement in areas of jurisdiction that it knew very little about, through strategies that were not always efficient. We have seen examples of that. Like me, we have experienced that. We could talk about the dental insurance program, which was a disaster.

However, the worst disaster in the federation is the fiscal imbalance, which mainly affects health care. I want to emphasize that point because it seems to me that we have not talked about it in a while. If memory serves, 1969 is when the public health care system was put in place. For every dollar invested in health care, 50¢ came from the provinces and 50¢ came from the federal government.

The Bloc Québécois has fought this battle. We have come back to this issue on numerous occasions over the past few years because barely 22% of today's funding for our health care systems comes from the federal government.

When only 22% of funding comes from the federal government, this implies that the remainder is borne by the provinces. Health care is the Quebec government's most important responsibility and the largest budget item. Looking at the current projections, it quickly becomes clear that between 42% and 45% of the Quebec government's total budget is devoted to a single responsibility: health care. This means that there is just over 50% of the budget left to cover all the government's other responsibilities such as education, the fight against poverty, the needs of local authorities, infrastructure requirements or support for Quebecers.

The federal government sometimes implements industrial strategies to support businesses, but they are not always appropriate. Allow me to give a rather striking example. We are currently experiencing one of the worst slumps in Canada's economic history due to our relations with the United States. The two hardest hit sectors are Quebec's forestry industry and the aluminum sector.

The situation in Quebec's forestry industry is the worst. With the combination of countervailing duties, anti-dumping duties and additional tariffs of 10%, 45% of these companies' profit margins are going right down the drain. They have no access to them given the tariff issue with the United States. The other major problem affects the aluminum industry, which is being hit with 50% tariffs.

What was the federal government's strategic response? It said that we needed to export more energy. That is rather shocking. The strategic response of the level of government with the greatest fiscal capacity was not to look at which sectors were most affected. Instead, the government looked at what opportunities were available to it.

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The government had an opportunity to advance the energy sector, one of its primary missions. It therefore chose to support the oil and gas industry, even though that industry was not affected by the crisis. It is true. The oil and gas industry is the only one that has not been affected by the crisis. Here is what I find even more shocking. When we look at the ownership structure of the oil and gas industry, we see that most of the companies belong to Americans.

The federal government has therefore decided to invest Quebecers' money in strategies aimed at supporting the only sector of the economy that is harming Quebec. This is an example of one of the federal government's major investments. This is of direct concern to the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, since he arrived just as I was talking about that. The federal government is making this investment using its fiscal capacity, but it is hurting Quebec.

We will therefore take the \$1.7 billion, since it is being paid out unconditionally, but once again it strikes me as a counter-example that proves that we are in a predatory federalist system.

I would love to hear the member for Winnipeg North contradict what I just said.

• (1915)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to hear that the Bloc sees the merit in voting for Bill C-26. He might want to revisit the whole health equation and also factor that into discussions that have taken place where there were tax points transfers in favour of fewer cash transfers back in the late seventies or early eighties. I might be a little bit off on the years there, but that should also be taken into consideration.

Having said that, since equalization payments came into existence, my home province of Manitoba has been a recipient. One of the nice things with Canada being part of a federal system is that there is a sense of fairness in the different regions through equalization payments. I, for one, look at Manitoba, which has been a very big beneficiary of equalization payments—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Jonquière.

Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, that is a new one. I did not see that coming.

Equalization payments must be calculated on a per capita basis, and there are more people in Quebec than in Manitoba. I would urge my colleague, the member for Winnipeg North, to take into account the fact that, every year, the Quebec government runs a trade deficit with the oil-producing provinces. Every year, the Quebec government probably sends far more money to Alberta than Albertans can send to Quebec.

As for the major investments that were made—yes, it is not a surprise—if the government had not used \$34 billion to buy a pipeline and instead made major investments in any other economy, we might be in a different situation today. We have paid for our energy infrastructure. It was Quebec, it was Hydro-Québec, that paid for its own energy infrastructure. It was not the entire federation.

That is worse than equalization.

• (1920)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba also paid for its hydro development. The question is not Quebec versus Manitoba, not at all. That is not what I am trying to get at.

What I am trying to get at is that one of the benefits of collaboration and being in the federation is that there is a higher sense of fairness and equity. The equalization payments are a good example of that. Manitoba has been a beneficiary every year since its creation. I do not know about Quebec.

I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts in regard to the benefits of equalization payments.

[*Translation*]

Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, the greatest benefit anyone can have in life is political autonomy. My neighbour is not the one who decides what I do with my earnings, how I use that money, how I will make it grow. I am the one who makes those decisions.

As I said earlier, politically, we are subject to a level of government that makes decisions that are contrary to our best interest. The government's response to the tariff crisis is one example of that. The only sector with no tariffs is the energy sector. All of the government's strategies focus on the energy sector, and that is what Quebecers' money is being used for.

This proves that the only way to succeed is to have political autonomy, and the only way we can achieve that is through independence.

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, equalization is intended to level out disparities in fiscal capacity. For a fairly long time, Quebec's ministry of finance used to publish what was known as the update on federal transfers. It revealed that almost the entire difference in fiscal capacity between the so-called “rich” and “poor” provinces could be traced back to non-renewable natural resources.

What happens when federal money is invested in oil? The provinces that produce the most oil get rich, while Quebec grows even more dependent on equalization.

I would like my colleague to explain for me how that can be a trap.

Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, it definitely is a trap. It is such a trap that it has even been documented. They call it “Dutch disease”. Quebec's manufacturing sector lost most of its jobs because the energy sector bumped up the value of the Canadian dollar. We are the ones who paid the price. I remember the former NDP leader speaking out against that. As soon as he came close to power, however, he chose to pander to the rest of Canada and pretend Dutch disease no longer existed.

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Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge all the brave men and women who are here tonight and who will be staying up late. I was joking around earlier with my colleague and neighbour, the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. All kidding aside, I think that she knows that I really like her. I mentioned behavioural issues because she was talking really loudly. However, we really like hearing her voice. That said, she still plans to support a closure motion. She is still going to vote in favour of it.

This is not the first closure motion that we have debated. As Parliament winds down for the summer, ever since the government managed to scrape together a majority by poaching members from the Conservatives and the NDP, it has imposed closure on not one, two, three, four or five bills, but nine. The government is likely going to keep Parliament in session until very late this Friday. That is okay because it is our job to be here. However, this is happening because the government is not communicating with the opposition parties properly. It is not managing its work in the House properly, and it is having a hard time setting its priorities.

The government has even introduced closure on Bill C-22. This is a bill that could be highly detrimental to Canadians' privacy and that will, in a sense, give the police access to our phones and our private data. Everyone understands that the legal framework needs to evolve, but imposing closure on this today is not something we were expecting. This is preventing serious parliamentary work from being carried out, yet I do not believe there was any real urgency. This is not the economic update. This is not tax legislation.

The same thing happened with Bill C-30. The government turned up in committee. I agree that not all the proposed amendments were sound. However, when the first Conservative amendment was moved, after barely two minutes of debate, the government made its position very clear. Through the member for Whitby, it made it known that no amendments would be tolerated, that the government now had a majority and that, ultimately, committee time serves only a superficial purpose.

The government is muzzling debate on important issues. One example is Bill C-30. Right now, the government is telling us that it was elected, that it has a job to do, that it has an agenda. The new government, which is now almost 11 years old, says it was elected with a job to do.

Now, the government is changing the law on pesticides to allow cabinet to make decisions that go against the science on pesticides. I am sure that there are plenty of great people in cabinet. However, there are no pesticide specialists or scientists who have conducted studies on the subject. The Green Party member came to talk to us about this in committee. She clearly explained that, when it comes to pesticides and the environment, this bill is the most regressive and the most damaging to human health and safety since possibly the 1970s. That was not in the Liberals' election platform.

Privatizing airports to funnel money into their so-called sovereign wealth fund, which does not have a single penny in it, was not part of their campaign platform. Allowing air passenger complaints to be outsourced to private sector companies chosen by the Minister of Transportation, who is himself buddies with the air-

lines, which may even choose the companies that will handle complaints about them, was not part of the Liberals' platform.

Even though filibusters may sometimes be necessary in cases of parliamentary deadlock, members of Parliament must still be allowed to do their jobs. They must be given the chance to do their jobs. Closure is a measure of last resort that is imposed when there is a genuine deadlock. After all, there is a reason why it exists in the rules. However, it is not meant to be imposed eight, nine, 10, or 11 times in two or three days simply because the government has not done its job properly.

I said it was not doing its job properly, so I will give some examples. Bill C-26 is one such example. Then there is Bill C-31. People need to understand that when a bill is introduced, opposition members must study it. To study it, they must be able to ask public servants very technical questions to have the bill's clauses explained to them. This is called a technical briefing. These briefings are generally provided shortly after we receive the bill, so that we can do our jobs.

• (1925)

When the Liberals imposed closure on Bill C-31, we had been asking the Department of Finance for a briefing for three weeks. We had not received a reply. Eventually, we were given a briefing on a Thursday, I believe, while everyone was attending committee meetings and almost none of the critics were able to attend. The following Monday, the Liberals introduced a closure motion. They claim that there is filibustering happening and that closure motions are necessary, but that is simply not the case. Now, we are in the same position with Bill C-26. We agree that Bill C-26 provides for unconditional payments to Quebec. This is rare; we welcome it and believe it is a sound approach. However, we have been asking for a technical briefing on Bill C-26 for about two months now. For two months, we have wanted to study and understand it, and now we are being hit with time allocation.

We finally came to understand it during consideration of the estimates. I was there for consideration of the estimates, and so was the Minister of Finance. There were many questions about this. At this point, we are taking the minister's word for it that he has reached an agreement with Quebec and that, based on this agreement, Quebec will receive its share of the funds, no strings attached. However, we had no way of knowing this from reading the bill. I had to stand up in committee of the whole to ask the Minister of Finance whether he intended to transfer the funds to Quebec with no strings attached. Only once we got answers in committee of the whole were we able to continue our own consideration of the bill. The bill states that the "amount of each payment is to be determined by the Minister".

This means that, once Bill C-26 is passed, the Minister of Finance can get up tomorrow morning and decide how much to pay each government. He has the right to do whatever he wants with this money; it is at his discretion. The bill also states that amounts are to be paid out "at the times and in the manner that the Minister...considers appropriate."

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Now we find ourselves in a situation where we have a vague bill, and we are realizing, after months, that the intent is there, that negotiations are happening, but also that our questions were legitimate. What is more, the explanations we got so we could understand this bill came from a press release. We had to pore over the press release to try to understand the government's intentions. It was almost like analyzing a religious text. Despite all that, we are in favour of Bill C-26. However, the government is telling us that there is interference, that there is work to be done, that they need to move quickly, that this is very important and that the opposition is blocking the process. That is not what is happening in this case. What we have here is a case of poor management of House of Commons time and poor management of committees by the office of the government House leader.

I should point out that Quebec is the only province with permanent social and community housing construction programs. In Quebec, the definition of "social and community housing" differs from the definition of "affordable housing" used by programs in the rest of Canada. When it came to programs managed by CMHC, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, with the possible exception of the rapid housing initiative, Quebec rarely received its share because these programs focused on high-rise apartment buildings in cities in the rest of Canada.

During the minute of time that I have left, I wish to say that under the current circumstances, with the construction and community ecosystems that are familiar with Quebec's programs, what is being done here today is important. It is important to recognize that the most effective approach for these programs is to take 20% or 22% of the amount and pay it directly to Quebec. I will end by saying that this would prevent the Liberals from doing what they did with Canada's national housing strategy, in other words, setting tons of conditions like the Trudeau government did and ending up in negotiations for three or four years, while we miss out on tens of thousands of completed housing units.

We are pleased that the minister has agreed to pay Quebec its share. We are convinced that it will lead to housing starts on the ground and benefit Quebecers.

• (1930)

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Mirabel, a riding to the north of my riding. I really enjoy his sense of humour and quick wit. I like that in my colleagues.

My colleague just told me a short while ago that he is leaning slightly in favour of Bill C-26, an act to authorize certain payments to be made out of the consolidated revenue fund for the purpose of improving housing supply. It would indeed allow housing construction to move forward as quickly as possible.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that, considering that this is federal legislation. We are in a federation.

What are his thoughts on this matter, since we will be able to build housing faster in the provinces, the territories and his riding, Mirabel?

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is one of those rare instances where Quebec will get its share of the cash, and it is

a sign of recognition that the federal government is not good at this, not good at building things. The federal government is not on the ground; it is a government that is far removed from immediate matters. This is a case in point, where Quebec must negotiate with Ottawa and go cap in hand to get its own money and put it into its own programs, which are already working.

That was the case with the national housing strategy when it was still around. Negotiations went on for three and a half years, while housing was being built everywhere else. An agreement was eventually reached, and only then did housing units begin to be built. This dates back to the Trudeau era, and these housing units are just now being announced. It is not so much that we are in favour of the federal government getting involved. We are in favour of the federal government writing a cheque. Quebec is the only province with permanent programs to build social community housing. It is important to recognize that the federal government is not good at this, but that Ottawa unfortunately has the financial resources. It takes a cheque.

[English]

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned that the Bloc supports Bill C-26. The key thing is that the bill would give the Liberal Minister of Finance a blank cheque to spend \$1.7 billion with no guarantee of results, targets or accountability to build homes.

With those concerns, why does the Bloc support the bill?

• (1935)

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I explained that in what my colleague referred to as my wonderful speech. I explained that, when we were looking at the estimates, I asked the Minister of Finance a question, and he answered it. I asked him whether he had negotiated with Quebec and whether he was committed to ensuring that Quebec would receive its share of funding with no strings attached. What we understood from the minister's answer and from our interactions with the department is that the government was taking into account the unique nature of Quebec's housing construction ecosystem this time and for this particular bill.

The Bloc Québécois always asks the government to send Quebec transfers with no strings attached, and we make a huge fuss when the government refuses to do so. However, when the government decides to transfer the money with no strings attached, when it recognizes that the matter falls under Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction and that Quebec is better at managing it, then we support the government. Then, the other nine provinces and territories can figure out the rest on their own.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his wonderful speech.

He mentioned the sovereign wealth fund, which the government refers to as the Canada Strong fund. We do not seem to hear anything about this fund anymore. That lasted two or three days. When the Liberals announced this fund with great fanfare, they immediately compared it to the sovereign wealth funds of Norway and Saudi Arabia.

Perhaps my colleague can do a better job of explaining it than I can, but I think that the government misled the population by comparing the fund that it put in place to the sovereign wealth funds of Norway and Saudi Arabia.

Could my colleague briefly explain why those funds are different?

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, that is a complicated question. There are all sorts of sovereign wealth funds. Every country has them. Norway's fund is used to accumulate oil revenues to benefit future generations, but above all to invest the money abroad in order to avoid Dutch disease. The same goes for Saudi Arabia. Also, China has funds that are used to influence geopolitics. However, all the funds that actually work share one characteristic, and that is that they contain money.

In our case, under sections 91 and 92 of the Constitution, natural resources are the exclusive property of the provinces. If there were sovereign wealth funds, they would be held by the provinces. This whole thing was just another excuse to make an announcement and slap “Canada strong” on something. In the end, it serves no economic purpose. That is why it was very poorly received by economists, commentators and people who will not benefit from it directly. The government looked a bit foolish because of it.

[*English*]

Chi Nguyen (Spadina—Harbourfront, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

I rise today in the chamber in support of Bill C-26, an act to authorize certain payments to be made out of the consolidated revenue fund for the purpose of improving housing supply.

At its heart, this bill is intended to make it easier for Canada to build more homes and the kinds of communities where people can truly live. For many Canadians, housing is not an abstract policy issue. When we think about housing, we must consider it as the starting place for the way Canadians imagine their future, where workers can live close to their jobs; seniors can remain close to their communities and age in place; and young people can rent, own or raise a family. This is an issue that even my preteen son is thinking about, wondering how he can remain in the city he loves.

It comes as no surprise that global economic pressures have reshaped the housing market. Rising construction costs, labour shortages and wages that have not kept pace with inflation have all contributed to the challenges we face today. We know that without secure housing, it is impossible to plan for the future, to build stability or to fully participate in Canada's economy. I see this clearly in my riding of Spadina—Harbourfront.

Spadina—Harbourfront is one of the densest communities in this country. It is a riding of high-rises, condominiums, co-operatives, rental buildings, shelters, supportive housing, student housing and seniors housing. This is a place where people live vertically. They share public space, rely on transit, walk to work, gather in parks, hang out at STACKT market, the Waterworks Food Hall, One Love market, Sugar Beach or The Island Cafe, and build community in ways that are deeply urban and deeply Canadian.

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In my riding, I see the beauty and possibility of density every day. Density can mean a senior is better able to live closer to health care, groceries and neighbours who can check in. It can mean that a young person can walk to school or work. It can also mean that families can share playgrounds, libraries, community centres and waterfront spaces.

Just last weekend, the waterfront was vibrating with excitement as we welcomed the world for the FIFA World Cup, with thousands cheering for Canada right from their condo balconies and watching the crowds gather in the streets.

We could live in communities with less sprawl, stronger transit and more vibrant main streets. Vertical living can work when we plan for people instead of units. We see examples of this across our community. Harbour Square, for example, has long shown how vertical communities can include shared services, including shuttle services that help residents move through the city and remain connected.

Across the riding, we see buildings where neighbours organize, support one another, share amenities and create a real sense of belonging. This is the kind of city building we should be learning from.

We also know the best housing solutions do not come from government alone. They come from housing co-operatives that show us that affordability, stability and community ownership go hand in hand. They can also come from organizations like Eva's Initiatives, which supports young people experiencing homelessness and reminds us that housing is not only about a roof, but about safety, connection, trust and the chance to rebuild a life.

The best housing solutions also come from thoughtful public planning, like the work of Waterfront Toronto, which has shown that when we build with intention, we can create communities that include housing, transit, parks, public space, climate resilience and access to water. This is the vision that we need more of in Canada: not just buildings, but more homes where people feel they have complete communities.

The housing crisis has also placed enormous pressure on the construction sector. In the greater Toronto area, new home sales fell to just over 5,300 units in 2025, which is the lowest level in more than 45 years. That slowdown has already led to job losses in the skilled trades and construction sector. These are the very workers Canada needs if we are going to build the houses people are counting on.

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Approximately 80,000 people are leaving the GTA because of affordability pressures. A study by Altus Group for the Building Industry and Land Development Association found that without urgent action, nearly half of all residential construction jobs in the region could be at risk and housing starts could fall by more than 60% compared to 2024 levels. We must act in order to protect housing supply and keep skilled workers on the job. We must make it easier to build, to build quickly and to build well.

Through Bill C-26, our government is proposing to provide \$1.7 billion to provinces and territories immediately so they can implement measures to increase Canada's housing supply. This funding is designed to help remove the barriers slowing down homebuilding, including by lowering development charges, fees, levies or sales taxes on new homes. It would also support efforts to harmonize rules, improve internal trade and increase productivity in the residential construction sector.

At a time when the housing market is under real pressure, this bill would keep projects moving, maintain construction activity, protect skilled jobs and unlock the homes Canadians urgently need.

Fixing Canada's housing issues will require a wide range of solutions and, above all, close collaboration. No single order of government can solve the housing crisis alone. The strongest housing systems are built when public, private, non-profit and community partners are all at the table.

• (1940)

We are already seeing what that collaboration can look like. In March, the federal government and the Province of Ontario signed a historic partnership agreement to build homes, transit and communities, backed by \$8.8 billion in joint funding over 10 years. This agreement supports housing-enabling infrastructure and helps reduce the cost of building new homes. It includes support for municipalities that reduce and maintain low development charges. This includes an HST rebate to incentivize new home construction and support for major transit projects to connect people to jobs and services. Ontario's removal of the full 13% HST for eligible buyers of new homes valued up to \$1 million, for one year from April 2026 to March 2027, is one example of what this kind of partnership can make possible. Through Bill C-26, our government has agreed to cover the 5% federal portion of that HST relief. This is a practical measure because it supports near-term construction activity while longer-term work continues to lower the cost of building homes. Since that announcement, new home sales in the GTA have begun to recover. In April alone, approximately 1,100 new homes were sold, nearly triple the number sold during the same period last year.

In Toronto, housing and infrastructure must be planned together. This is why investments like the waterfront east transit project are so important. This project will connect communities such as East Bayfront, the Port Lands and Ookwemin Minising. It is not only a transit investment, but a housing strategy. Good transit helps unlock new neighbourhoods and connects people to work, school, child care and community. It supports the construction of thousands of new homes in places where people can live with dignity and connection.

We are also moving forward with Build Canada Homes, an ambitious initiative to accelerate homebuilding across the country, including transitional, supportive and deeply affordable housing. This program includes a \$13-billion initial investment, the development of federal lands, support for factory-built housing and measures to preserve long-term affordability. It is already supporting thousands of new units and has the potential to deliver tens of thousands more. The legislation before us would give these efforts the flexibility and tools they need to accelerate delivery, take on risk responsibly and build the housing Canadians are counting on.

In a city like Toronto, where affordability remains one of our greatest challenges, this kind of relief can make a meaningful difference. It helps more buyers enter the market and supports the construction of the homes we so urgently need. This why this bill is so important. It is a measure that has been called for by housing advocates, including organizations like BILD, and it represents a clear win for builders, workers and residents in my riding.

Canada's housing market is going through a period of adjustment, but that does not change the reality that we are facing a structural housing supply shortage. Our government has been clear: We will build more homes faster and more boldly. Bill C-26's purpose is to support housing supply, protect Canadian jobs and maintain capacity in the construction sector. By acting now, we can keep construction activity moving, retain skilled workers and ensure that builders can continue to plan and launch new projects at a time when that continuity is critical.

The housing crisis did not happen overnight and it will not be solved overnight, but the choices we make today will shape the future of housing in this country for generations to come. Our government is here today working to provide Canadians with the tools they need to build that stability. Bill C-26 is one important step toward that goal. We are taking meaningful action to address one of the most pressing challenges facing Canadians today. We are working closely with provinces, territories and municipalities, because we know that collaboration is essential in a moment like this.

Government Orders

In Spadina—Harbourfront, I see every day that density can be beautiful, that vertical living can be full of community and that good planning can help people build real lives in the heart of a city. This is the future we should be building toward. For that reason, I urge all members to support Bill C-26.

• (1945)

Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-26 gives the Liberal Minister of Finance a blank cheque to spend \$1.7 billion with no guarantees of results, targets or accountability to build homes. In fact, the word “housing” is in this bill only twice.

My hon. colleague mentioned the rebate program, the program that was signed with the Province of Ontario, yet there is no specific program put in place through regulation on how that rebate will work. That is my understanding. I have had developers call me as late as last week. They cannot find out from the Ontario government how the rebate works. When they are told by the province to go to the CRA, the CRA is telling them it does not know how this program works. Perhaps the member can tell us how this rebate program will work.

Chi Nguyen: Mr. Speaker, I think this is a really important opportunity to show that kind of collaboration between the provincial government and the federal government, and to get the communications and clarity around the policy decisions that we need. We have set targets for our housing pieces. I know that last year in Toronto we actually took back some of the funding because the city was not meeting some of the targets around multiplexes, and in Vaughan as well. There are mechanisms, and we are making sure that the housing we are investing in gives us the returns we are looking for.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic that the member from downtown Toronto gave a speech on the challenge of access to housing and housing construction, because I get the impression that, for the last 30 years, the federal government has been doing nothing but building housing in downtown Toronto.

In rural regions like mine, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, it is virtually impossible to access any federal programs that operate in rural areas. Ask any member who represents a rural area more than 200 kilometres from the U.S. border, and they will say that they struggle to access any federal housing programs that actually work.

That said, I would be curious to put the question to my colleague from Spadina—Harbourfront. Before entering politics, she was an activist for democracy in her professional life, particularly regarding the role of women in democracy. Did she get into politics to vote to shut down the debate one, two, three, four, five, six, seven or nearly ten times?

I would like to hear her comments on that, because this bill will also be passed under time allocation.

[*English*]

Chi Nguyen: Mr. Speaker, when we talk about rurality and the need for housing, we know that this is a challenge not just in downtown Toronto or in downtown Vancouver; it is a challenge across our country. However, one of the things that I have learned about,

in terms of the new investments that we have been making, is an initiative in Nunavut where we will be building modular housing and building that in the north. It is a step in the right direction, and it is a step in the work of building the infrastructure we need to make Canada strong. Those efforts are really critical for this time, and I know that this is a huge part of the work that we all want to be doing as Canadians.

• (1950)

Dominique O'Rourke (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the previous question was about what the rush is in terms of passing this legislation. I want to ask my hon. colleague this: When you are out in the community, the amazing Spadina—Harbourfront, are you hearing from people that this is a housing crisis and an emergency, and that they want us to move quickly during construction season? Let us answer this: What is the rush in the House to pass this legislation?

The Deputy Speaker: Just before I recognize the next member, that member was using “you” to the Speaker. I have not been to Spadina—Harbourfront recently, but I will ask the member for Spadina—Harbourfront to respond.

Chi Nguyen: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague here for her excellent leadership. I know I have learned a lot from her in our time together in Parliament, from the deep expertise she brings as a city councillor and her understanding of some of the mechanisms around some of this work.

It is true that there is real urgency, and in terms of this funding, I know the builders and some of the developers have signalled that the pause and the challenge of the instability mean that they are looking for our government to take on some of the risks, in order for us to be able to move forward. Part of this investment in Ontario, and I spoke in particular about the waterfront east transit project in Toronto, is for housing-enabling infrastructure, including transit. This is the kind of work that I think is really going to set the country up for success.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, coming out of the last election, the Prime Minister and the government made it very clear that housing was going to be a priority of this government, the issue of housing affordability, and we have seen that demonstrated in budgets and legislation. Once again, we have before us a very important piece of legislation that would give literally hundreds, if not thousands, of Canadians the opportunity to have a more affordable home. To me, that is what this is all about.

There are two aspects that, I believe, would be profoundly and positively impacted by this particular piece of legislation. The most obvious is those who would have the opportunity, through this substantial break in terms of costs, to purchase and acquire a home. Another aspect that I would suggest we need to take into consideration and that would really benefit is our construction industry as a whole.

Government Orders

I would like to provide comments on both of those issues, but first I will provide a quick comment, because I know members have raised the issue, on timing and concerns in regard to how quickly the government is trying to get this legislation through before the summer break. It is absolutely critical that we are there to deliver for Canadians in a very real and tangible way, which is exactly what Bill C-26 would do.

One thing that members need to recognize is that we brought the legislation into the House just last Thursday. The very first speaker on the legislation took two hours and 45 minutes of speaking time before he decided to let other members within the Conservative caucus speak. There should be no surprise coming from the Conservative benches that the government is concerned in regard to why, once again, we are seeing a Conservative opposition that tends to not want to see legislation pass, and then starts to criticize the government for not passing legislation. We have found, just like Stephen Harper, that at times the government needs to have a programming of legislation in order to be able to get the legislation passed. That has become very clear here in the House of Commons over the last number of months. The Prime Minister and every Liberal MP understand how important it is that we get the monies in that are so critically important.

This is one aspect. It was not long ago that we were debating legislation for Build Canada Homes, which had a focus on affordable homes and has already been having tangible results because we had co-operation, independence and opportunities to expand through collaboration in that area. We are talking about thousands of homes in the making as a direct result of that piece of legislation. That is exactly what we are going to see here.

We now have a Minister of Housing who has already had the discussions necessary with a province we should all be concerned about. The province of Ontario has some serious issues with housing starts. I am from Manitoba, but I understand the importance of trying to push those housing starts in the province of Ontario and other jurisdictions. I was very pleased to see the collaboration between the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario, and it was to the degree that we now have an agreement where we will see the sales tax that would normally be applied to the construction of a new home dropped. That is going to save Ontarians tens of thousands of dollars. By presenting it in a fashion in which Ontario and Canada, in co-operation, are collaboratively working together, we are providing an incentive that will see many people in Ontario make the decision to build.

That is the purpose of providing this incentive. It makes it more affordable, and we will see more homes being built this year in the province of Ontario as a direct result of two levels of government working together collaboratively, recognizing a problem and coming up with a direct action, a direct action that would complement other aspects of housing that the Government of Canada is working on.

It is not just provincial governments that we recognize. We also recognize municipalities, and how it is that municipalities can benefit from working with the different partners, whether it is the provincial government or the national government. I remember having a discussion with the mayor of Winnipeg and the mayor talked about the hundreds of homes that have been built directly be-

cause of the support that the city has received from the federal government. I say that because it is a different level of government, and it demonstrates clearly that Ottawa, our national government, does have, and should have, a role when it comes to housing in our nation.

I was pleased with the Bloc members who indicated that they would be supporting the bill. It is not too often that I say nice things about the Bloc, but this time, I will, because I see that members of the Bloc have recognized the value of a national government being able to support and work collaboratively with a provincial government. They recognize how residents of Quebec would actually benefit from it, as demonstrated by the Canada and Ontario benefit. I hope the Province of Manitoba will reach some sort of an agreement shortly. The sooner the better, I would suggest, so that the residents of Manitoba will likewise benefit under the program.

I believe that our new Prime Minister, who was elected just over a year ago, made it very clear how important it is as a government to work collaboratively, where we can, with provinces to the benefit of Canadians. Housing is one of those areas where we have actually been somewhat successful.

● (1955)

We have already had buy-in on Build Canada Homes, first the agency and now the Crown corporation. There are different stakeholders and different industries getting involved, like modular homes, non-profits, housing co-ops and other forms of housing. Today, we are talking about that \$1.7 billion. Injecting that into the housing industry will enable many Canadians to have the opportunity to save, while at the same time reinforcing the importance of our construction industry. It is the workers who have the skill sets, the carpenters, the plumbers, the electricians, the roofers and the pipefitters. These professions are so critically important for building Canada strong.

Putting in policies and bringing in legislation of this nature is going to provide jobs and opportunities in many different ways, whether it is for training facilities or for those who are currently employed in construction. It is also for those purchasing the homes, selling the homes and building the homes.

There are many winners, because we recognize how important it is for the federal government to continue to work with provinces in a collaborative fashion to enhance the number of homes in Canada's housing stock. We are committed to increasing that housing stock, dramatically, in the coming years.

● (2000)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 8:02 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Motion No. 11 under Government Orders now before the House.

The question is as follows.

Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

[English]

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

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded vote.

• (2005)

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (2045)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 165)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Anderson	Anstey
Arnold	Au
Baber	Bailey
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt)
Berthold	Bexte
Block	Bonk
Borrelli	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Calkins
Caputo	Chambers
Chong	Cobena
Cody	Cooper
Dalton	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Niagara South)
Dawson	Deltell
DeRidder	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Duncan	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)	Falk (Provencher)
Gazan	Genuis
Gill (Calgary Skyview)	Gill (Brampton West)
Gill (Calgary McKnight)	Gill (Windsor West)
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)	Goodridge
Gourde	Groleau
Guglielmin	Gunn
Hallan	Hardy
Ho	Hoback
Holman	Jackson
Jansen	Jivani
Johns	Khanna
Kibble	Kirkland
Kmiec	Konanz
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kronis	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Lantsman	Lawrence
Lawton	Lefebvre
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Lloyd
Lobb	Mahal
Majumdar	Mantle
Martel	Mazier
McCauley	McLean (Calgary Centre)
McPherson	Melillo
Menegakis	Moore

Morin	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Reynolds	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Rowe	Ruff
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Small
Steinley	Stevenson
Strahl	Strauss
Stubbs	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Uppal	Van Popta
Vien	Viersen
Vis	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Williamson	Zimmer— 134

Government Orders

NAYS

Members

Acan	Al Soud
Ali	Alty
Anand	Auguste
Bains	Baker
Bardeesy	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Begum
Belanger (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River)	Bendayan
Bittle	Blanchette-Joncas
Bonin	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Champagne	Champoux
Chang	Chartrand
Chatel	Chen
Chenette	Chi
Church	Clark
Connors	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dancho	Dandurand
Danko	DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont	Deschênes
Deschênes-Thériault	Desrochers
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Earle	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson	Fancy
Fanjoy	Fergus
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Fry	Gainey
Garon	Gasparro
Gaudreau	Gerretsen
Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)	Gladu
Gould	Grant
Greaves	Guay
Guilbeault	Gull-Masty
Hajdu	Hanley
Harrison	Hepfner
Hirtle	Hodgson
Hogan	Housefather
Hussen	Iacono
Idlout	Jaczek
Jeneroux	Joseph
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Klassen

Government Orders

Koutrakis	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)
Lapointe (Sudbury)	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lavack	Lavoie
Leitão	Lemire
Lightbound	Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Ma
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacDonald (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Malette (Bay of Quinte)
Malette (Kapusking—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)	Maloney
Martin	May
McKelvie	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McKnight	McLean (Esquimalt—Saanic—Sooke)
Ménard	Mendès
Michel	Miedema
Miller	Mingarelli
Morrissey	Myles
Naqvi	Nathan
Nguyen	Noormohamed
Normandin	Ntumba
Oliphant	Olzewski
O'Rourke	Osborne
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Provost
Ramsay	Rana
Robertson	Rocheffort
Romanado	Ross
Royer	Sahota
Saini	Sarai
Sari	Sawatzky
Schiefke	Sgro
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sodhi	Solomon
Sousa	Ste-Marie
St-Pierre	Sudds
Tesser Derksen	Thériault
Thompson	Turnbull
Valdez	van Koeverden
Vandenbeld	Villeneuve
Watchorn	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zerucelli
Zuberi— 187	

PAIRED

Members

Anandasangaree	Bezan
Blois	Fuhr
Gaheer	Gallant
Godin	Joly
Kelly	Kuruc
Lalonde	LeBlanc
McGuinty	McKenzie
Plamondon	Shipley— 16

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

[*Translation*]

The next question is on the main motion.

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

• (2050)

[*English*]

Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded division.

• (2100)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 166*)

YEAS

Members

Acan	Al Soud
Ali	Alty
Anand	Auguste
Bains	Baker
Bardeesy	Battiste
Beech	Begum
Belanger (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill Riv- er)	Bendayan
Bittle	Brière
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Champagne
Chang	Chartrand
Chatel	Chen
Chenette	Chi
Church	Clark
Connors	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dandurand	Danko
d'Entremont	Deschênes-Thériault
Desrochers	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Earle
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Eyolfson
Fancy	Fanjoy
Fergus	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Fry	Gainey
Gasparro	Gerretsen
Gladu	Gould
Grant	Greaves
Guay	Guilbeault
Gull-Masty	Hajdu
Hanley	Harrison
Hepfner	Hirtle
Hodgson	Hogan
Housefather	Hussen
Iacono	Idlout
Jaczek	Jeneroux
Joseph	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Klassen	Koutrakis
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)	Lapointe (Sudbury)
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lavack	Lavoie
Leitão	Lightbound
Long	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Ma	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacDonald (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Malette (Bay of Quinte)	Maloney
Martin	McKelvie
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McKnight
McLean (Esquimalt—Saanic—Sooke)	Ménard
Mendès	Michel

Miedema
Mingarelli
Myles
Nathan
Noormohamed
Oliphant
O'Rourke
Petipas Taylor
Provost
Rana
Rocheffort
Royer
Saini
Sari
Schieffe
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Solomon
St-Pierre
Tesser Derksen
Turnbull
van Koeverden
Villeneuve
Weiler
Yip
Zerucelli

Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Nguyen
Ntumba
Olszewski
Osborne
Powlowski
Ramsay
Robertson
Romanado
Sahota
Sarai
Sawatzky
Sgro
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sodhi
Sousa
Sudds
Thompson
Valdez
Vandenbeld
Watchorn
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi— 164

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Anderson
Arnold
Baber
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Berthold
Blanchette-Joncas
Bonin
Borrelli
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Champoux
Cobena
Cooper
Dancho
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dawson
Deltell
Deschênes
Doherty
Duncan
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)
Fortin
Gaudreau
Genuis
Gill (Brampton West)
Gill (Windsor West)
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)
Gourde
Guglielmin
Hardy
Hoback
Jackson
Jivani
Khanna
Kirkland
Konanz
Kramp-Neuman

Aitchison
Allison
Anstey
Au
Bailey
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt)
Bexte
Block
Bonk
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Chambers
Chong
Cody
Dalton
Davidson
Davies (Niagara South)
DeBellefeuille
DeRidder
Diotte
Dowdall
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Garon
Gazan
Gill (Calgary Skyview)
Gill (Calgary McKnight)
Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)
Goodridge
Groleau
Hallan
Ho
Holman
Jansen
Johns
Kibble
Kmiec
Kram
Kronis

Points of Order

Kusie
Lake
Larouche
Lawton
Lemire
Lewis (Essex)
Lloyd
Mahal
Malette (Kapusking—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)
Martel
Mazier
McLean (Calgary Centre)
Menegakis
Morin
Motz
Nater
Patzner
Perron
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Richards
Rood
Rowe
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Simard
Steinley
Stevenson
Strauss
Thériault
Tochor
Uppal
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Williamson

Kwan
Lantsman
Lawrence
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lobb
Majumdar
Mantle
May
McCauley
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Reid
Reynolds
Roberts
Ross
Ruff
Scheer
Seeback
Small
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Stubbs
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vierson
Wagantall
Waugh
Zimmer— 156

PAIRED

Members

Anandasangaree
Blois
Gaheer
Godin
Kelly
Lalonde
McGuinty
Plamondon

Bezan
Fuhr
Gallant
Joly
Kuruc
LeBlanc
McKenzie
Shipley— 16

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ADMISSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 13

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to the point of order raised earlier by the member for York—Durham.

What we have before us today is not just a programming motion, it is a dangerous precedent, an abuse of the procedural power of the majority. Government Business No. 13 introduces a retroactive deadline for amendments to be tabled in committee, which is, to my knowledge, unprecedented and highly inconsistent with the very spirit of our rules.

Government Orders

Let us be clear: A rule that sets a deadline that has already passed is not an organizational tool. It is a trap. When a government uses such a mechanism to close down debate, it is not managing the business of the House; it is taking it away.

The power to schedule work exists to allow for expedited consideration of bills in accordance with the Standing Orders, not to deprive members of their fundamental right to amend, discuss and improve a piece of legislation.

Some government members seem to have had the opportunity to table their amendments before the deadline, when the deadline was not known to all the other members. This is serious. That gave those members an unfair advantage over members of the opposition. This procedural imbalance is unacceptable. In a House where every member is supposed to have the same rights, I would say that is unacceptable.

Parliamentary procedure is not a weapon at the government's disposal; it is the framework that protects all members of Parliament, notably against the tyranny of the majority. This sort of manoeuvre does not constitute good parliamentary administration; it is an abuse of procedure.

Previous rulings by the Chair are relevant here because they highlight a fundamental point: The House cannot, on the pretext of efficiency, run roughshod over the legislative stages. The Chair must protect not only the form but also the integrity of the process. When a motion actually prevents members from carrying out their duties, the Chair must declare it inadmissible. Otherwise, we open the door to a precedent whereby the government will henceforth be able to set retroactive rules, reserve benefits for its own members and then close the door to any correction.

We cannot mince words here. This is not merely a procedural innovation; it is an abuse of process. It is an attempt to circumvent the normal parliamentary scrutiny of an important bill—very important, in fact. This is precisely the sort of situation that the Chair must prevent if it is to preserve the credibility of this institution.

• (2105)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for sharing her point of view.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has a point of order.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, very briefly, I completely agree with the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon.

[*English*]

I would like to make it as clear as I can.

[*Translation*]

I agree with the Bloc Québécois member on her point of order. The things that are happening in Parliament right now really are anti-democratic.

[*English*]

I want to put on the record my support for the point of order by the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon.

[*Translation*]

As is so often the case, she is right. I am so very grateful to her.

* * *

[*English*]

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

Hon. Gregor Robertson (for the Minister of Finance and National Revenue) moved that Bill C-26, An Act to authorize certain payments to be made out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the purpose of improving housing supply, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to say that I will be sharing my time with the member of Parliament for Trois-Rivières whom I have the great honour of working with in our shared roles as parliamentary secretaries to the Minister of Infrastructure and Housing.

I am thankful for the great privilege to speak today to Bill C-26, an act to authorize certain payments to be made out of the consolidated revenue fund for the purpose of improving housing supply.

Over the past year, Canadians have navigated a rapidly changing and increasingly fragmented world, and Canada is not immune to the economic uncertainty that this has caused. We are dealing with a new reality that is more complex, more volatile, and for many people, more costly and unpredictable. In response, our government remains focused on solutions and on doing the hard work to support our communities, our industries and Canadians.

The current government was elected on a strong mandate to build, and a key area of focus for the Prime Minister and our whole caucus is easing the housing crisis. Put simply, far too many Canadians are struggling to find a home they can afford. Bill C-26 is an important part of our comprehensive plan to address this decades-old issue, which is why we need to get it passed and to get it passed quickly.

The legislation would authorize the Minister of Finance to make immediate payments to provinces and territories to support measures to increase housing supply. The proposed funding, totalling just over \$1.7 billion, would help make housing more attainable for Canadians. These federal funds would be transferred to provinces and territories to be used exclusively for measures that increase housing supply, including but not limited to reducing development fees or levies on new home construction and making incremental investments in provincial and territorial programming already in place to spur housing development.

Across the country, far too many Canadians are struggling to find a home they can afford. That is why we are taking action on multiple fronts to tackle the housing crisis. We are cutting red tape, investing in housing-enabling infrastructure and modernizing the homebuilding sector. Bill C-26 is part of that broader approach.

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We have seen encouraging signs of progress in many parts of the country, and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation confirmed that there is cause for optimism. Its “Spring 2026 Housing Supply Report” showed that housing starts increased by 6% in 2025, driven by record levels of rental construction, construction completions and growing activity in missing middle housing. These are encouraging signs, but we know we have more work to do.

We have implemented several federal initiatives to increase housing supply. Last week, the House passed legislation to establish Build Canada Homes as a Crown corporation with the mandate to scale up the supply of affordable housing nationwide. In less than a year, Build Canada Homes has already advanced thousands of projects across the country to increase Canada's affordable housing supply. Soon, Build Canada Homes will have even more tools to get housing built across the country.

Other measures, including targeted tax relief such as removing the 5% GST on new purpose-built rental construction, are lowering upfront costs and helping projects move forward. Programs such as the apartment construction loan program and CMHC's mortgage loan insurance projects help builders secure the capital they require to keep building, while the housing accelerator fund helps to unlock supply by cutting red tape and speeding up approvals.

We are also investing in the infrastructure that makes housing possible. The Canada housing infrastructure fund and the new build communities strong fund support housing-enabling infrastructure, including water and waste-water systems, because homes cannot be built without the underlying systems that support them. A tangible example of this is a recent agreement with the Province of Ontario that reflects our commitment to help municipalities reduce development charges by 30% to 50% or more. These types of costs directly affect whether housing projects move forward. They have a direct impact on the economics that determine whether a project proposition moves forward with construction now or waits until another construction season.

When we talk about thousands of units across the country, we are talking about real places that people will be able to call home. Whether it is families or young people getting their first start, seniors, or individuals who find themselves in need, thanks to the work of the government, these individuals will have the stability, the opportunity and the safety that having their own home provides.

• (2110)

These projects would also mean thousands of jobs for labourers, carpenters, plumbers, framers and other workers across the country. They would mean opportunities for local suppliers and local businesses. At a time when our economy faces the risks of an uncertain world, the government is making the choice to invest in ourselves and to strengthen Canada. Bill C-26 would help to further address these pressures.

The \$1.7 billion proposed in the legislation would give provinces and territories the flexibility to take targeted action to unlock housing supply quickly and effectively where the communities need it most. This funding could and would make a real difference. Ontario's recent HST rebate announcement on new homes is a key example of how these transfers would improve supply.

As part of tax relief efforts, the Ontario government, thanks to federal support tied to the bill, plans to rebate the full 13% harmonized sales tax on new homes valued up to \$1 million, saving buyers up to \$130,000. This has already had a positive impact on home sales, as the low-rise sector surpassed its 10-year average for the first time in three years, according to BILD, the Building Industry and Land Development Association. With the passage of this legislation, we could continue to make a positive impact across the country based on the local needs and priorities of the provinces and territories.

Addressing Canada's housing crisis requires more than a one-size-fits-all approach. It demands a unified, all-hands-on-deck effort rooted in partnership, flexibility and immediate action. Bill C-26 would help bridge the gap between national ambition and local delivery, with targeted funding for provinces and territories to accelerate housing starts. By empowering our partners, we can build more homes faster and help ensure that every Canadian has a place to call home.

Bill C-26 has been designed to unlock new housing supply across the country. Its passage would ensure that the needed funds contained in the legislation would get to the provinces and territories more quickly. I urge all members of this great House to support the legislation.

• (2115)

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask the member if she can just tell us what the \$1.7 billion would accomplish, because we have already thrown a lot of money at the situation. We have empty condos now that do not suit the market in Toronto. Now we would give the development industry more money when there are empty lots to be developed once the actual economics make sense. We keep aiming for these problems that we are creating, yet what the government suggests is a crisis is something of its own making. How is it going to square this by just throwing another \$1.7 billion of taxpayer money at it, thinking it would solve everything that the government's last few billion dollars thrown at it has not solved so far?

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Jennifer McKelvie: Mr. Speaker, we have a comprehensive approach to addressing housing in this country, and with this bill we would help provinces and territories remove barriers that are holding back homebuilding. This includes measures such as lowering development charges, fees, levies or sales taxes on new homes. It would also support efforts to harmonize rules, improve internal trade and increase productivity in the residential construction sector.

The bill would build on the work we are doing with Build Canada Homes to catalyze a new industry of modern methods of construction, accelerate the construction of affordable housing and build on the work we are doing with the provinces to lower development charges.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as things stand, conversations about housing are, naturally, conversations about Build Canada Homes. However, for the past year, Build Canada Homes has been having a lot of trouble getting its programs up and running.

We have been told a number of times that the CMHC no longer exists and that people have to contact Build Canada Homes instead. Build Canada Homes' own standards dictate that it must provide responses within 30 days. However, Build Canada Homes is not meeting that deadline. I think this is a very serious problem.

Now, people are being told to contact the CMHC, which is no longer supposed to have any files. Can someone set the record straight? Who is in charge now? Is it the CMHC or is it Build Canada Homes? When can we expect useful answers?

[*English*]

Jennifer McKelvie: Mr. Speaker, I am so excited that the legislation for Build Canada Homes has passed through the House. It will enable them to increase the tools that are available to them for financing affordable housing across this great country.

They will have new tools that they did not have before. They will be able to go beyond grants and beyond loans. They will be able to really look forward at things like guarantees and equity and a whole bunch of different financial tools that were not available to them before. We all look forward to the ramping up of this great new agency and building affordable homes across the country.

Dominique O'Rourke (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I just want to celebrate the Guelph & District Multicultural Festival, which celebrated its 40th anniversary this weekend. I congratulate Anu Saxena, their chair, and also Cinthuja Leon, who is their executive director. It was another amazing weekend.

When I am out at these community events, people really want to know how soon we can see the waiver of the HST on new homes in Ontario.

My hon. colleague was a municipal councillor, as I was. What is the urgency in passing the legislation and getting the money flowing?

How important is that money, in terms of ensuring that people can buy their home now, a new home that would be built in the fu-

ture, in terms of smoothing out the construction, so that, in fact, we are seeding builds for the next several years?

Jennifer McKelvie: Mr. Speaker, there is good news for Ontario residents and for the residents of Guelph. The deal that we have made with the Province of Ontario will be backdated to April 1 of this year. All new homes purchased since then will have a waiver of the HST. As I mentioned, that is the equivalent of saving \$130,000 on a \$1-million home. We are not stopping there. We also have affordable housing projects that are under way, from coast to coast to coast, including in Guelph. We look forward to working with the member so that we can have shovels in the ground in her community.

[*Translation*]

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my excellent colleague, the parliamentary secretary, and Minister Robertson, of course. It is a pleasure to work with them.

● (2120)

The Deputy Speaker: I must interrupt the parliamentary secretary. Ministers are not to be referred to by name in the House. They should be referred to by their title.

I invite the parliamentary secretary to continue her speech.

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill C-26, an act to authorize certain payments to be made out of the consolidated revenue fund for the purpose of improving housing supply.

This bill would authorize the Minister of Finance to make immediate payments to the provinces and territories to support measures aimed at increasing the housing supply. The proposed funding of more than \$1.7 billion would help make housing more affordable for all Canadians. This federal funding would be transferred to the provinces and territories and used exclusively for measures aimed at increasing the housing supply, such as reducing development and new home construction fees, as well as for additional investments in existing provincial and territorial housing creation programs. Because we know that the housing market varies from one province or territory to another, we believe that they are in the best position to ensure that the funds are invested where they will have the greatest impact for Canadians.

Unfortunately, after calling for such measures for months, the Conservatives are once again trying to throw a wrench in the works and stall this bill in order to prevent the provinces and territories from accessing these funds. Earlier today, the Conservatives moved to adjourn the House instead of allowing this bill to move forward. This is the third time that the Conservatives have moved such motions to adjourn in recent days. Why are they doing this? They know full well that the measures that we are proposing, such as Bill C-26, will have a positive impact on the housing market. We know that they do not like good news.

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I am a new MP, and I never thought that elected officials could take satisfaction in the headwinds we are facing, with the tariff war affecting businesses and the geopolitical turbulence that brings new challenges every day. However, we on this side of the House are rising to the challenge. The Conservatives know that Bill C-26 is part of a series of concrete measures that our government is creating to make a difference and fix the housing crisis. They heard this from many experts, developers, non-profits and government officials who appeared before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities to testify about the importance of lowering building costs and increasing the supply of affordable housing in order to ease the pressure on rents. This is part of what Bill C-26 proposes. They know that this bill complements Build Canada Homes, the new investment agency working to increase the supply of affordable housing across Canada. Since its launch last fall, Build Canada Homes has already reached agreements to build over 11,400 units, most of which is affordable housing.

I am tired of hearing them mislead Canadians day after day by saying that Build Canada Homes has not done anything yet. I will provide a few examples.

In Nova Scotia, there is a partnership worth up to \$300 million to build up to 1,430 affordable housing units.

In Manitoba, Naawi-Oodena, a historic redevelopment project carried out in partnership with Treaty 1 first nations and the Canada Lands Company, will see 320 affordable homes built. A total of 2,100 units could be built on the entire site.

In Quebec, our governments announced in April a joint investment of nearly \$200 million to build 865 new affordable housing units across Quebec. This is on top of the 1,055 units that had already been announced in Longueuil in December 2025.

In the north, we have reached an agreement in principle with the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated to build 750 units, including affordable public housing with support services.

In Ontario, we partnered with the City of Ottawa to build up to 3,000 affordable homes for mixed-income households.

To sum up, the number of agreements and projects that are shovel ready far exceeds the time I have to speak.

These projects also mean thousands of jobs for construction workers, electricians, plumbers, carpenters and many local businesses across the country. In an uncertain economic environment, our government is choosing to invest in Canada and Canadians. Last week, the House of Commons passed the bill to make Build Canada Homes a Crown corporation. We now hope that it will be passed quickly by the Senate so that this new agency can have all the tools it needs to speed up housing construction.

• (2125)

It is important to note that the Conservatives did not make any changes to this bill. However, they voted against it. They voted against the thousands of affordable housing units that will be built across Canada, in the ridings of all my colleagues here in the House. They voted against affordable housing for families strug-

gling to make ends meet. They voted against better housing for seniors who need a bit of a break. Now, once again, they are opposing Bill C-26. I hope that the Canadians listening to us today take note of this and understand what it means, specifically that the Conservatives do not care about affordability.

Bill C-26 is part of a package of measures we are introducing to accelerate housing construction in partnership with provinces, territories, municipalities and indigenous communities. These include measures like the build communities strong fund, which will invest more than \$51 billion in our communities, including in infrastructure that enables housing construction, such as water and sewer systems. Housing cannot be built without the underlying systems needed to support it, and the need is great across Canada.

Just two weeks ago, the Prime Minister, together with the Premier of Quebec, announced a historic agreement between Canada and Quebec for \$10 billion in investments to build more housing across Quebec. That includes \$2.6 billion for infrastructure. This is the kind of constructive federalism we support. Our goal on this side of the House is to work and serve Canadians, not to play political games.

Bill C-26 includes other measures, among them targeted tax relief, such as the elimination of the 5% GST on new rental housing. Here again, the goal is to reduce upfront costs and move projects forward. Programs such as the apartment construction loan program and the CMHC's mortgage insurance products are available to help builders secure financing.

The proposed \$1.7 billion in Bill C-26 would give the provinces and territories the flexibility they need to take targeted measures to increase the housing supply quickly and effectively where communities need it most. This flexibility is essential, because housing needs are not the same in Whitehorse, Montreal, Halifax, or Iqaluit. The provinces and territories are best positioned to determine the measures that will rapidly increase the housing supply in their communities. Collaboration with the provinces and territories is at the heart of this bill.

Solving Canada's housing crisis requires more than a one-size-fits-all approach. It requires a concerted effort in which everyone pitches in, an effort based on collaboration, flexibility, and immediate action. On this side of the House, we understand that. Bill C-26 will help turn our ambitions into meaningful results. We must act now. Canadians need more housing, communities need support, and our economy needs us to keep building. Above all, Canadians need the opposition to get to work. I therefore urge all members of Parliament to support Bill C-26.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard from the member opposite that 11,000 homes were built. Of course, that is assuming agreements. I also heard "will allow" four times and "MOUs". The government's promise was 500,000 homes per year. Minus 11,000 homes, my calculation says that we are short 489,000 homes for \$13 billion.

Would the member opposite agree with my mathematical calculation of 489,000 homes short this year?

[Translation]

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows full well that we never said the government was going to build 500,000 homes. Our job is to bring together the conditions needed for the market to build them. The homes themselves will be built by developers and builders.

We are working with the provinces to create a regulatory framework that will keep things moving quickly and put financial tools in place to get projects started. We are indeed very proud of the 11,400 housing units to be added to the 260,000 housing starts already made last year.

• (2130)

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on February 17, a technical briefing was held about Build Canada Homes. During that meeting, it was stated that Build Canada Homes would provide a response to the organizations within 30 days so that they would know what to expect. Unfortunately, what we are seeing today, several months later, is that Build Canada Homes is unable to meet these deadlines because it does not have the necessary staff. Worse still, it is referring organizations to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which is no longer supposed to be accepting applications.

Will the parliamentary secretary commit to ensuring this 30-day deadline is met and to following up with her minister?

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, Build Canada Homes is not yet a Crown corporation. In fact, we are awaiting the Senate's approval of Bill C-20.

Yes, this remains one of Build Canada Homes' commitments. We are working very closely, in fact, with the Société d'habitation du Québec on all projects from Quebec that are submitted to Build Canada Homes. We work jointly and are in regular contact with all the organizations that submit projects. I myself meet with dozens of them every week.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful and glad that we have already made an agreement with Canada's most populous province. There is an agreement with Ontario now. The minister has been able to work with the province and in collaboration with Premier Doug Ford.

I am wondering if my colleague could provide her thoughts on just how important that is, not only for the people who are going to be purchasing homes but also for the construction industry as a whole in the province of Ontario.

[Translation]

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague said earlier, we are already seeing the results of these announcements. However, developers are telling us that they need certainty that this bill will pass and that the funding will actually get out the door. That is what they are waiting for. That is what is making them nervous right now.

They testified before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities last week and told us that the market is accelerating and has become much more dynamic since the bill was announced.

[English]

Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I found it interesting that the member opposite was talking about Conservatives not caring about affordability. I would argue that all we talk about, day in and day out, is affordability.

What we have an issue with is how many times the Liberal government fails, over and over again. For the grocery plan, the finance minister brought the CEOs to Ottawa to give them what for, but it did not lower the price of groceries.

Now we have had an announcement in front of a fake house. When are we actually going to get things built?

[Translation]

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate what my colleague on the other side of the House said. Yes, the Conservatives talk about it every day in the House, but they do not do anything to support the arguments they are making in the House today. They voted against Build Canada Homes. They voted against the national school food program. They voted against the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. They voted against the Canada child benefit—

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time today with the member for Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North.

Before I turn to the business at hand, I would like to share that I was in Hamilton this morning for the change of command of the Royal Canadian Navy. I have had the honour of serving and sailing with both naval officers, Vice-Admiral Angus Topshee and Vice-Admiral Dan Charlebois. After four years of distinguished service and amazing leadership, Vice-Admiral Angus Topshee has turned over command of the Royal Canadian Navy. I think of all the amazing things he did, and he should be acknowledged for his care of those sailors and the others who worked for him. As well, I want to send my congratulations to recently promoted Vice-Admiral Dan Charlebois, who will be taking over command of the Royal Canadian Navy. I have no doubt that he will lead with distinction.

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Today, I rise to oppose Bill C-26, an act to authorize certain payments to be made out of the consolidated revenue fund for the purpose of improving housing supply. As always, I rise on behalf of the great people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford on beautiful Vancouver Island, the seniors, the young families, the trades workers, the veterans, and the men and women who get up before dawn, work hard, play by the rules, yet watch the dream of owning a home drift a little further out of reach every year that passes.

In the Cowichan Valley today, the benchmark price of a single-family home sits above \$780,000. Across Vancouver Island, it is close to \$800,000, and in greater Victoria, including Langford, the average sale price is now nearing \$1 million. However, there are people behind those numbers, and I know many of them by name. I know veterans, men and women who once wore this country's uniform, who are now living out of their trucks. I know forestry and mill workers who have been knocked down by mill curtailments and closures and are now living in campers. I know people who have been taxed out of the very homes they worked their whole lives for, who are now living in trailers and tents. I know young couples who have all but given up on the idea that they will ever stop renting.

When I speak about housing in this chamber, I am not speaking simply about a line in a budget. I am speaking about the greatest single worry in people's lives right now. This bill is such a disappointment to me because the people I represent do not need another illusion. They need a home.

The government has a real gift for illusion. Bill C-26 is dressed up as Emerald City on the Hill, with \$1.7 billion announced with a great deal of fanfare, and all of it said to be for housing. What I would ask of every member of Parliament is that they pull back the curtain and reveal what the illusion is. When they do, they will find that the whole substance of this bill is in a single small section that says, "The Minister of Finance may make payments to the provinces and territories, the total of which is equal to \$1.713 billion". It also says, "The amount of each payment is to be determined by the Minister of Finance." Those payments may be made "at the times and in the manner that the Minister of Finance considers appropriate."

That is the entire bill. There are no conditions attached to it. There is no requirement to come back and report to Parliament, no definition of what "improving housing supply" is even meant to mean, and nowhere does the government commit to building so much as a single home. The government claims there will be 11,000 for the \$13 billion it is spending. What we are being asked to approve is not a housing plan at all, but a blank cheque, and we are being asked to trust the one man who gets to fill in that amount.

We have seen this before, and not long ago. Buried inside division 16 of the last budget bill, Bill C-31, was the Defence Investment Agency act. I studied it closely as a member of Standing Committee on National Defence, and tucked away in it was a remarkable power: the authority for a single minister to draw up to \$1 billion at a time out of the very same consolidated revenue fund. It is the same fund, the same kind of open-ended discretion, and it is once again being slipped quietly into a budget where most Canadians would never think to look. I spent a better part of three decades in uniform, and I can plainly tell members of Parliament that we do

not rebuild a military or a country on a blank cheque, a fancy press release and announcement.

Now, here we are again with Bill C-26. It is a different minister and a different file, but the very same approach. The Minister of National Defence was reaching into that fund \$1 billion at a time, and now the Minister of Finance is reaching into that fund for \$1.7 billion more. The illusions have many names, and it is my job to pull back that curtain and expose the reality.

● (2135)

This is not a coincidence. It is becoming a habit of the government to gather the money and the decisions into as few hands as possible, strip away the accountability that ought to come with them and trust that the fancy announcement of the day will carry the day. I would gently remind the House where that kind of governing tends to lead. When enormous public resources can be moved around by a handful of powerful people with little real scrutiny, we are no longer describing a healthy democracy. We are describing something closer to an oligarchy.

An oligarchy is never built one dramatic stroke at a time. Rather, it is built quietly, one billion unaccountable dollars at a time. When money on that scale can move on the say-so of one minister with no criteria and no audit, I think we all know who tends to benefit in the end, and it is rarely the young family in Langford or the senior in Duncan. Instead, it is the well connected and the well placed.

This brings me to the real question at the heart of this bill. It does not ask us to trust an institution with all of its checks and balances and safeguards. It asks us to trust one man: the Minister of Finance. I think it is fair to ask whether that trust has been earned.

Let us consider the record. The minister told Canadians he had recused himself from the Alto high-speed rail file, one of the most expensive projects in our country's history, because his own wife serves as vice-president at the very corporation building it. He wrote a letter, he announced a screen, and he assured us he had stepped aside. However, when a motion came before Parliament that would have stripped the high-speed rail provisions out of the government's budget bill, the minister did not step aside at all. He stayed and voted to protect the project.

Both of these things cannot be true at the same time. Either he genuinely recused himself or he voted on a matter that reached his own wife's employer. Hundreds of millions of dollars have already been spent and poured into that project, and the track has yet to be laid.

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I do not raise this to make anything personal. I raise it because accountability is the whole purpose of Parliament, and this is the same minister who is asking for the same trust on the same terms, only now the figure is \$1.7 billion higher. I have not risen here only to criticize and to show the illusion. The people of Vancouver Island deserve better than what this bill offers, and there is a better way forward, so let me set it out.

First, we could tie the money to results rather than to announcements. The funds should flow against real, measurable increases in housing starts and completions that are verified and made public. Second, we would put the conditions in the legislation itself, not in one minister's head. We need clear criteria, clear timelines and clear reporting back to Parliament. Third, we would bring in the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Auditor General to follow this money, from the first dollar to the last nail, and tell Canadians honestly whether it worked. Finally, we could direct the funding to the communities that are actually developing, improving and building homes, be it on Vancouver Island or across the country, rather than rewarding the ones that stall. That is how a government could actually improve the housing of Canada.

The people of Vancouver Island are not easily fooled. They have been shown the Emerald City before. What they are asking for this time is a home they can afford in a community they love and a government they can actually trust with every dollar it spends. They are watching this debate right now, and they are waiting.

Let me be clear: I cannot support Bill C-26 as it is written. If it does proceed to committee, it must not pass unchanged. It must be fixed. It must be amended to carry the safeguards I have set out today. We need real conditions, real reporting and real oversight so that every dollar is tied to a home built and not one more announcement.

The people of Vancouver Island deserve nothing less. The people of Canada deserve nothing less. They deserve a government they can trust and a Parliament with the courage to hold \$1.7 billion of taxpayers' money to account. I urge every member of Parliament on all sides to summon that courage.

• (2140)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the member is wrong on so many counts. In one sense, he needs to realize that what we are talking about is \$1.7 billion, working in collaboration with provincial and territorial jurisdictions, to increase Canada's housing stock.

The best example is the one that has already been negotiated in collaboration with the Premier of Ontario, which is a Progressive Conservative government. We have come to an agreement where we are going to have residents purchase new homes and save literally tens of thousands of dollars on each home. To deny that this would motivate more home constructions and more home ownership is denying reality. Why will the member not recognize reality?

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, to be frank, I am absolutely not worried what the member opposite thinks, and neither are Canadians. There have been 11,000 homes built so far under a project for \$13 billion that is looking for an extra \$1.7 billion. Let us be serious. There is absolutely no accountability. The Prime Minister pledged

500,000 homes per year, and there were 260,000 starts last year. My math says we are short 240,000. That is what Canadians care about, not what the member opposite has to say.

• (2145)

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for his thoroughness. He has the ability to keep things in perspective, which is nice to see in this Parliament, especially after the two very partisan speeches given by the parliamentary secretaries.

I enjoyed hearing my colleague's ideas on how to improve accountability. I would like him to expand on that. How does he propose that we cut more costs, especially in relation to housing? Housing falls under provincial jurisdiction.

Would transferring money to the provinces with no strings attached not be the best way to cut down on paperwork and red tape, cut costs, increase housing construction and improve access to housing for those who need it most?

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his great question.

[*English*]

I appreciate my colleague's kind words and the opportunity to speak a little, very briefly in the time I am allowed, about some of the improvements. I laid it out fairly clearly in my speech, but it is about accountability. Look, we love when money is spent to help housing in Canada. We are always accused that we are voting against that and voting against Canadians. No, we are voting against lousy bills that are wasting money and are not building houses, and we have seen that with \$13 billion for 11,000 houses. That is what we are voting against. We are voting for Canadians. I encourage my colleague to review my notes and go over the four points for bringing accountability.

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleague brought up concerns with regard to Bill C-26 and also the spending of \$1.7 billion. My concern with this spending is the lack of accountability. Over the last 11 years, there have been various scandals provided by this Liberal government, such as the WE Charity scandal, the arrive scam scandal and the PrescribeIT scandal. With the lack of accountability, there could be opportunities for another scandal with this bill.

I would like my colleague to possibly comment on that and tell us what he thinks.

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke of accountability and scandal. He listed some of these scandals, and the list goes on and on and on.

My concern is both the lack of accountability and the illusion. We heard in an earlier statement from the members opposite claims of rejoicing. That is an illusion. We have heard claims, for example, of 2% NATO spending when SIPRI, the global standard for reporting NATO spending, reports it is only 1.6%. It is all an illusion. There were 500,000 homes pledged per year, and only 260,000 starts. Again, that is another illusion.

Canadians are tired of the illusions. They are tired of the scandals, and they are tired of this government.

Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you will indulge me for a moment, as Sunday is Father's Day, I would like to thank my father for his love and support to me and my three brothers, for the life lessons he taught us and for his humour, his compassion, his very practical common sense and his love of nature: happy Father's Day to Dad.

Let me get back to the matter at hand, which is Bill C-26, the so-called improving housing supply act. Before discussing the details of this legislation, it is important to recognize why housing remains one of the most pressing issues facing Canadians.

For generations, home ownership was part of the Canadian promise. If someone worked hard, saved responsibly and played by the rules, they could reasonably expect to purchase a home, raise a family and build a future in the community they loved. Today, that promise feels increasingly out of reach. Young Canadians who have done everything right are finding themselves locked out of the housing market. Many are delaying major life decisions. They are postponing marriage, postponing starting a family and postponing putting down roots in their communities because the cost of housing continues to rise faster than their ability to save.

According to the OECD, approximately 35% of low-income Canadian households are cost-overburdened, meaning they spend more than 40% of their disposable income just on housing. Renters are watching an ever-larger share of their income disappear each month, making it even more difficult to save for a down payment. The average rent on a two-bedroom purpose-built apartment in Canada rose 5.1% to \$1,550 per month in 2025, and that is if one is lucky. In my home community of Hamilton, the 2025 average rent was over \$1,600 per month. Under the Harper Conservative government in 2015, the national average was just \$942 per month.

Increasingly, it has become a question of whether future generations will enjoy the same opportunities that previous generations of Canadians took somewhat for granted. That is why all members of this House should be focused on one goal: building more homes. Unfortunately, while there is broad agreement on the problem, there is far less agreement on how to solve it.

Bill C-26 is presented as a measure to improve housing supply. The legislation itself is relatively short. It is only two paragraphs. In essence, it would authorize the Minister of Finance, with a giant blank cheque, to make payments to the provinces and territories up to a maximum of \$1.713 billion for the purpose of improving housing supply. It is a lot of money, and there is not a lot of indication as to whether there would be results. At first glance, that sounds like a big number and maybe that would achieve something. Canadians do want more homes built. The Conservatives certainly want more

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homes built. The question is whether the legislation would actually accomplish that objective. That is where concerns begin to emerge.

When Parliament is asked to approve \$1.7 billion in spending authority, Canadians certainly have the right to expect a clear plan. They have the right to expect measurable objectives. They have the right to expect accountability. Yet, when members examine Bill C-26, they will find very little detail about what success looks like. How many homes would be built? How many housing starts would result from this spending? What benchmarks would be used to determine whether the money was spent effectively? What reporting requirements would exist to ensure that taxpayers could evaluate the results? This legislation provides few answers. Instead, Parliament is being asked to approve a substantial amount of public spending while placing considerable discretion in the hands of the Minister of Finance. If a municipality came before taxpayers asking for \$1.7 billion, citizens would expect a plan. If a private company sought \$1.7 billion from investors, shareholders would expect measurable outcomes. Surely Canadians deserve no less when it comes to federal spending.

Let me be clear. Conservatives support working with the provinces to increase housing supply. We support reducing the tax burden on new homes. We support measures that make it easier to build. The partnership with the Province of Ontario promises funding over a 10-year period to boost housing supply. However, in the announcement, there are no clear benchmarks on how many houses would be built. In fact, buyers, home builders and even the Government of Ontario are still unclear as to how this rebate would be implemented. In question period today, the Liberal government gave no clear answer to the question from our shadow minister of housing about when the rebate would be implemented.

● (2150)

Time and again, Canadians hear announcements. Time and again, Canadians hear promises. Time and again, Canadians are told that relief is just around the corner, yet housing affordability continues to worsen. The reality is that after Liberal housing programs over the past number of years, with billions of dollars spent and countless announcements, Canadians are still asking a simple question: Where are the homes? The CMHC cautions that Canada needs 430,000 to 480,000 new homes per year through 2035 to restore affordability to pre-COVID levels.

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The government frequently talks about ambition, but Canadians are looking for results. The government frequently talks about investments, but Canadians are looking for homes. The government frequently announces new programs, but Canadians are asking why housing remains less affordable today than it was a decade ago.

One of the most notable aspects of Bill C-26 is the government's agreement with Ontario regarding the decision to remove the HST from eligible new homes. Conservatives have long argued that taxes imposed on home construction ultimately make housing more expensive. That is why we support lowering taxes on housing. However, we also believe that Canadians deserve something better than temporary measures and complicated rebate programs. Our position has been consistent: We would permanently remove the GST on new homes under \$1.3 million. That would be permanent, not a one-year fix.

The Canadian Home Builders' Association agrees with our vision. It too would like relief on taxes to be made permanent. A permanent GST cut would provide certainty for homebuyers, builders and the housing market. It would reduce costs while encouraging the construction of additional housing supply. That is the difference between a measure designed to generate headlines and a measure designed to generate the building of homes.

Another concern is the government's continued focus on creating programs and bureaucracies instead of a focus on outcomes. Canadians do not measure success by the number of announcements issued by governments. They measure success by whether they can afford a home, whether housing starts are increasing and whether their children have a realistic path to home ownership. Those are the metrics that matter. Canadians understand that housing affordability will not improve because government creates another program, fund or bureaucracy.

After the introduction of the bill in March, between the months of April and May, housing starts decreased by 6%. That is not progress. Housing affordability improves when homes are built. That means reducing delays, accelerating approvals and ensuring that infrastructure keeps pace with growth. Conservatives believe that federal funding should be tied to those outcomes, and that is what we have proposed.

Municipalities that increase housing construction should be rewarded. Municipalities that continue to block growth should expect that taxpayers will not subsidize that failure. The objective should be simple: more homes built every year, not more paperwork, bureaucracy or announcements but more homes. Canada already has the workers, materials, expertise and entrepreneurial spirit needed to address the housing crisis. What is missing is a federal government willing to focus on results instead of process. Canadians are tired of hearing that help is coming. They want to see the homes being built and families getting a key in the door of the home they can actually afford. That is the standard by which the bill should be judged.

Conservatives continue to advocate for policies to get homes built. We continue to push for lower taxes on housing. We continue fighting to remove barriers to construction. We will continue standing up for young Canadians, families and workers who simply want the opportunity to own a home and build a future in this country.

Canadians deserve those results, they deserve accountability for \$1.7 billion, and most importantly, they deserve a government focused on building homes instead of building bureaucracy.

• (2155)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about wanting results and output. When the leader of the Conservative Party was minister of housing, six non-profit houses were built. That is how much he was able to accomplish. He was the worst minister of housing in the history of Canada.

Let us compare that to just over a year ago. Thousands of affordable housing units are on their way to being built, and a record amount of money is being invested to encourage housing development. The Cadillac, of course, with this particular bill is likely going to be the province of Ontario, where there is tens of thousands of dollars in support. Individuals are already making decisions to build homes in the province of Ontario because the Province of Ontario and the federal government are working together collaboratively in order to make it—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North.

Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about reality in his question to the previous speaker. Let me get to that in a moment, but the Province of Ontario, the government itself, home builders and buyers are waiting to see this program actually be implemented. They do not understand how this rebate is going to actually happen. That is one thing. Here is the reality faced by Ontarians, Canadians and young Canadians in particular. Before these Liberals, 11 years ago, because of the taxes and bureaucracy they support, the average monthly mortgage payment in this country was \$1,432. The average rent was \$943. People could afford to buy a home. Now, a third of the cost of building a home is government, and this is symptomatic of the problem of the current government.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the debate on Bill C-26 is a good time to take stock of what the new Liberal government has accomplished after a year in office, even though the Liberals have been in power for 10 years, as we all know.

When it comes to housing, there has been talk of cutting spending and eliminating immediate affordability supports, such as the Canada housing benefit, and supports for existing social housing. Budget 2025 also indicates that spending will drop to just \$4.3 billion in 2028-29, a 56% drop compared to the funding allocated for 2025-26.

If housing were really a priority for the Liberal government, would it be making such drastic and predictable cuts over the coming years?

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• (2200)

[English]

Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's point is valid. It is not the spending, whether it is increasing or decreasing, and we have debated that, that is resulting in the construction of homes. We need builders to have confidence. We need an economy that is, as it was 11 years ago, the strongest-performing economy in the G7, the strongest-performing economy in the OECD, not the only economy in the G20 that is in recession. That is what is going to help build homes and ensure that they are affordable for young Canadians to actually enter the market.

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the story is the same, same and not different with this bill and all of the other money that has flowed through provinces where housing starts did not increase and the price has not gone down. In fact, it has gone up. Earlier today, we asked the Minister of Housing how many houses the \$1.7 billion would build. We even asked the parliamentary secretary, who had a slightly better answer than the minister, but there is still no answer at all about how many houses the \$1.7 billion of taxpayers' money would build.

I ask my hon. colleague if he knows how many houses the \$1.7 billion the House is being asked to approve right now will build.

Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point. We were asked to approve, with this bill, a \$1.7-billion blank cheque with no idea as to how many homes are going to be built with that. In fact, we do not even know from the Province of Ontario when that is actually going to be implemented, or how that is going to result in home-building. This question was asked in question period. We received no answer. The question was asked in this debate so far this evening. We received no answer, so we have no idea how many homes are going to be built for the giant cheque of \$1.7 billion. We should be incentivizing builders to build by cutting the third of the cost of a home that is government, which is fees, taxes and all of the roadblocks at the municipal level that we Conservatives have proposed to help remove.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, five years ago, I rose in the House to note that my son, Léon, was finishing elementary school. Naturally, five years later, it is time for his high school graduation ceremony, which he will be attending on Saturday. I would like to tell him that I am very proud to be his father and offer him my sincerest congratulations, especially since he made a name for himself in Quebec with his performance at the Quebec Games last summer, where he won two gold medals in swimming, for the breaststroke.

I also want to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean. Let us start by saying something important about Bill C-26: The Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this bill simply because it is necessary to transfer funds quickly and without delay to help Quebec build and set its housing priorities.

It is rather ironic that the Auditor General of Canada issued a report on child care services. As members know, this policy resulted in an unconditional transfer being made to Quebec. That is because, in 1997, Quebec had already created the network of early childhood

centres to provide affordable child care for everyone. This system is renowned and has proven its worth.

Transferring the money directly to Quebec will allow Quebec to manage its affairs as it sees fit and in accordance with its own reality. That is precisely what Bill C-26 does. It transfers the funds earmarked for affordable housing to the authority that has jurisdiction in this area. As a result, Quebec will be able to ensure that it develops strategies based on its priorities and aligned with the realities of the various communities within its territory. It will be in a position to develop its own strategy for social and affordable housing.

Another advantage is that it reduces administrative costs, because the province already reports on its own expenditure through its own budget. Instead of duplicating costs, the government sends the money directly, cutting red tape and eliminating duplication, which means that everyone wins. Since the money comes without conditions, Quebec will be able to use a variety of means to influence the rental supply, whether that means building housing-related infrastructure, such as sewers and water systems, introducing tax relief or building social and affordable housing. In short, Quebec will have the tools it needs to take effective action using the various levers at its disposal.

Transferring this \$1.7 billion allows the provinces to take immediate action, and that reduces wait times. It differs from the strategy of Build Canada Homes, which is just another Crown corporation that creates more duplication, more management costs, more public servant hiring and so on. Transferring the money to the provinces reduces the size of government and gives responsibility to the governments that are actually responsible for housing. Quebec and the provinces each have their individual realities. Quebec's reality differs from the reality in British Columbia. Yukon's reality is completely different from New Brunswick's reality. If every province takes charge of its responsibilities based on its own reality, we will end up with more tailored, more flexible programs.

Over the past few months, at meetings of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I have personally questioned various departments about their definitions of urban, rural and remote regions. As the member for a region that could be described as rural and remote, this question concerns me tremendously. What we observe is that the federal government has a distorted view of rural regions. To the Government of Canada, any census area with a population of 100,000 or less is a rural region. Geographic factors apparently do not matter. Abitibi-Témiscamingue is located six or seven hours from urban areas, depending on the destination. That makes it impossible to compete with cities located in the suburbs. The reality is that transferring the funds to Quebec ensures that realities like mine are respected.

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Another issue is all the regulatory requirements in federal programs that do not apply to Quebec because it has the Civil Code. Basically, this creates new obligations for Quebec stakeholders, resulting in additional delays and costs to meet a requirement that does not even apply in Quebec. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lynda Perreault, a member of my team who works in my office and helps organizations navigate the complexities of organizations such as CMHC and Build Canada Homes.

● (2205)

To date, Build Canada Homes still cannot meet its own 30-day deadline for responding to proposals. It made that commitment during a technical briefing on February 17. The truth is, Build Canada Homes does not have enough staff to review the applications. As a result, it has to ask CMHC—or perhaps I should say “the agency formerly known as CMHC”—to do what it used to do: review applications. Who suffers as a result? The projects and the organizations themselves.

For my region, the upshot of this is that we will often miss the construction season. Unfortunately, our summers are shorter than elsewhere. We lose years to administrative delays. Mortgage costs are often passed on to the organizations that wanted to balance their budgets without taking out a mortgage. Winter construction in Abitibi—Témiscamingue is not really an option. Our winters are very long, so we have no choice but to be more efficient during the summer. Delays result in additional costs for many non-profit organizations that are just trying to create social and affordable housing for vulnerable populations. They end up with extra costs, forcing them to cut back on their operations, which means they end up helping fewer people.

A lot of construction is happening in Abitibi—Témiscamingue right now. However, it is private development. While that is a good thing, it means that families and lower-income individuals are unable to afford these new properties. Furthermore, several developers were told that their applications would be transferred to Build Canada Homes. The reality is that this has not happened. They have to start all over again and resubmit their projects. This means even more hours of work lost for non-profit organizations. If the money had been transferred to Quebec, this sort of problem would not be happening. The solution is so simple.

That is, of course, provided that it does not take two years to sign the agreements, meaning that inflation eats up the lion's share of the funds allocated to Quebec. The Canada housing infrastructure fund agreement was finally signed after two years. The result was an agreement under which Quebec received only \$1 billion of the program's \$6-billion budget, or 16.6%, which is far less than its share of the population. This is also what is known as a fiscal imbalance. Quebec should have received \$1.3 billion to match the figures calculated using the needs identified by the Union des municipalités du Québec, yet we received \$300 million less.

The Liberal members from Quebec do not boast too much about that. If we add the inflation of the past two years, we must acknowledge that that money will not go as far today as it could have. It is important to remember that Quebec municipalities are currently experiencing one of the most serious housing crises ever, while a lot of the infrastructure is aging and no longer suitable to today's re-

ality. It is time for Ottawa to do what it must do, which is to unconditionally transfer the money to Quebec and the provinces as soon as possible. This would be a win-win situation for everyone.

I want to give some examples. In 2016, funding for major housing-related infrastructure was also announced, and that funding was immediately allocated to Ontario. It is interesting because the programs in Ottawa are designed with Ontario's reality in mind. It took over three years to reach an agreement with Quebec. I have to talk about inflation again. Then came COVID-19. Then came the skyrocketing cost of housing. Because of this, we were not able to build as many housing units. The amount of housing built was much less in Quebec because of all these constraints. If Quebec's reality had been respected and this money had been transferred with no strings attached, the housing shortage that we have been seeing across Quebec, and particularly in Abitibi—Témiscamingue for the past 20 years, would not be as significant now. That is not without consequences.

I can give a wide range of examples that show that federal programs do not work in Quebec and in rural and northern regions like mine. Energy efficiency requirements are problematic. Ottawa wants to tell us how we should manage energy efficiency, but Quebec City's criteria are different. This means we have to send an inspector on site. That results in additional costs and delays. All of this means we cannot meet deadlines. We cannot finish construction on time, and we lose years of construction time.

It is entirely Ottawa's fault. Ottawa should mind its own business and do what Bill C-26 thankfully calls for, namely, respecting the jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec and transferring the funds unconditionally.

● (2210)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the member. I believe that federalism works when we have collaboration between different provinces. For the member to try to give the impression that one province is given a priority over other provinces is just wrong. There is a collaboration that works with different provinces. Different provinces have different time frames.

What I do know is that Canadians in every region of the country understand and want to see the federal government play a role in regard to housing. If there had been a stronger role from 2006 to 2014, we probably would not have the serious issue regarding affordable housing today. Some provinces might do better than other provinces, but the federal government does have a role to play and it is not just to be an ATM.

Does the member not believe that working—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

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Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I wish I were wrong, but the record of the last 10 years in this Parliament shows that I am not wrong and that funding does not reach Quebec, or if it does, it is only after several years' delay. Obviously, this means there is less money in current dollars available for the construction of these homes. When will we see a program that is truly adapted to the regions of Quebec? When will the government stop focusing solely on Toronto and its suburbs? When will the government take an interest in the true rural regions of Quebec and the rest of Canada? Not all of Canada's regions are within 200 kilometres of the U.S. border.

Unfortunately, such programs do not exist because they are designed for towns with a population of 100,000 or less. We do not have those resources or that expertise in our municipalities.

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my friend from Quebec a question about government spending, because an additional \$1.7 billion is to be spent on housing across the country. Quebec households are paying the cost of interest on both the federal and provincial deficits. For each household, that amounts to \$3,400 a year in federal government debt and \$3,000 a year in provincial government debt. That money is being thrown down the drain. We are paying more in interest.

Is supporting this government bill a waste of money?

• (2215)

Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Calgary Centre, whom I hold in particularly high regard.

As I said, this is one of the few bills that involves an unconditional transfer. In effect, this means that Quebec's money will be returned to Quebecers. For that reason, we are somewhat open to it.

We generally find that, with programs such as the Canada housing infrastructure fund, Quebecers pay their full share, namely 22.5%, corresponding to their share of the population. However, they receive only 16.6% of the funding, meaning that Quebecers are paying to create housing elsewhere rather than at home, even though Quebec has significant housing needs.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if there is anything my colleague has not mentioned. This evening, we are considering Bill C-26.

Is there any aspect of Bill C-26 that has not been mentioned that my colleague would like to address?

Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, one issue that is very important to me, particularly as the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, is access to housing for first nations.

I would like to see a program created by and for first nations. I am thinking in particular of the Yānonhchia' program, which aims to develop indigenous expertise but is not necessarily reaching the communities because of the way federal programs are designed. In every budget, the federal government allocates billions of dollars for indigenous infrastructure, and it presents that as though it is something really wonderful. Even today, \$4.5 billion is being set aside for access to clean drinking water.

In reality, however, expertise is not being developed within first nations. So many unattainable standards and requirements are imposed on the communities that, one year later, because the deadlines are extremely tight, Ottawa takes its money back and puts it back in the coffers. It then pats itself on the back for properly managing the money, since, in the end, it spent less than expected.

At the end of the day, the needs remain unchanged and the quality of life for first nations is getting worse.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we hear it all the time, but this time it is especially true. I am pleased to rise to speak to the long-awaited Bill C-26. It took a long time to understand the actual impact of Bill C-26. Even though the bill contains too few details for us to judge, the government refused to provide us with information or answer our questions for two months. These were two months wasted, and here we are studying the bill under a time allocation only a few days before summer.

What is Bill C-26? With only one clause, a person might think it insignificant, but that is far from true. The first subclause of this one-clause bill provides the following:

The Minister of Finance may make payments to the provinces and territories, the total of which is equal to \$1.713 billion, for the purpose of improving housing supply.

This is wonderful, but the second sentence, less so.

The amount of each payment is to be determined by the Minister of Finance.

The second subclause provides the following:

Any amount payable under subsection (1) may be paid by the Minister of Finance out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund at the times and in the manner that the Minister of Finance considers appropriate.

The words “at the times and in the manner that the Minister of Finance considers appropriate” carry serious consequences, but I will return to that later.

Let us start with the positive. Bill C-26 finally provides funding that will go directly to the provinces and territories for housing without going through a new federal structure or entity such as Build Canada Homes. Once the bill receives royal assent, the transfer will essentially be unconditional, as long as Quebec and the provinces use it for housing initiatives. That is a good thing. There continue to be acute housing needs, and only a transfer that does not come with unnecessary conditions can get projects off the ground quickly instead of sparking a protracted tug-of-war between Quebec City and Ottawa.

This means that \$1.7 billion will be going directly to provincial governments to support the housing supply. That is exactly what the government should have done for all of its housing initiatives, because the housing situation is not the same in Rimouski, Montreal, Val-d'Or, Sept-Îles, Alma, Dolbeau or Roberval. It is even less so from one province to the next. To claim that a centralized structure in Ottawa can impose a uniform vision that works everywhere is to profoundly misunderstand regional realities and the constitutional division of powers.

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We saw this with the programs managed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. When Ottawa selected projects, Quebec systematically received less than its share. It was only when there was a transfer with an envelope set aside for each province that things went smoothly. I am thinking here of the rapid housing initiative. Not only that, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimated in his December report on Build Canada Homes that “[Build Canada Homes] will add about 26,000 units over five years, representing a 2.1 per cent increase in housing completions relative to [the Parliamentary Budget Officer’s] baseline projection.” An increase of 2.1% as a result of \$7.3 billion in spending is a pretty expensive percentage. It is \$3.5 billion to be exact. We are supposed to believe with these estimates that Ottawa knows better than the provinces when it comes to housing, which, I repeat, is within their own jurisdiction.

We would have been quite happy to vote on this bill sooner, if only the government had been transparent and provided us with the details we requested two months ago, instead of dragging its feet as usual. In fact, we have had to keep pressing it for these answers ever since the bill was introduced in March.

We know the federal government well. I have been an MP for seven years. When a transfer is announced, it usually comes with strings attached, even when funds are transferred for areas of jurisdiction that are not federal. Details about potential hidden conditions are exactly what we have been trying to obtain for two months, as I said.

• (2220)

The bill, with its single clause, makes no mention of this. However, it contains this magical phrase, which is magnificent, “at the times and in the manner that the Minister of Finance considers appropriate.”

The press release announcing Bill C-26 was just as vague. It mentioned the build communities strong fund and a “requirement on provinces and territories to reduce development fees and other charges to homebuilding.”

What does that mean, exactly? Is this \$1.7 billion part of the build communities strong fund? Is it a mandatory requirement for accessing the fund? Is it simply a guideline? Nothing is clear. We are in the dark. Unfortunately, experience has taught us to be cautious. All too often, vague wording hides requirements that are, in fact, very real.

Beyond the issue of the terms, there was another equally crucial issue: Quebec's share. When nothing is set in black and white for Quebec, we know how it ends. Quebec is almost always underfunded in federal housing initiatives. That is why we need a clear guarantee that Quebec will receive at least its share, proportional to its population.

The second sentence of the bill states that the amount of each payment is to be determined by the minister. That is far from a guarantee. We asked the Minister of Finance and National Revenue about this two weeks ago during the business of supply. He assured us that Quebec would receive its fair share, that the Government of Quebec was aware of the amount and had approved it. We are

somewhat reassured by that answer, but it took two months to get it.

We are nearing the end of this parliamentary session. We are debating under a closure motion. Meanwhile, the situation remains urgent. Housing needs have not diminished, and projects have not progressed any faster. Worse still, this delay comes at a particularly critical time for Quebec. As my colleagues are aware, the October general election in Quebec is fast approaching. Once the election campaign gets under way, the government will be restricted to dealing with day-to-day business. We hope that the Parti Québécois will win the next election. I look forward to debating the merits of a referendum on Quebec independence with my colleague from Winnipeg North. This is going to be fun.

Now, I will get back to my speech. In order to actually get the funding provided for in the bill where it needs to go, Quebec first has to sign an agreement with Ottawa and then it has to sign funding agreements with the municipalities. We are running out of time if we want shovels in the ground this spring, but the Prime Minister's refusal to discuss the matter has caused a two-month delay. I will say it again. I do not know how many times I have said that we are two months behind, but that is what is happening. I am not making that up. Because of this, we could miss an entire construction season.

Not only that, but if we look at the January 21 agreement between Ottawa and Quebec under the Canada housing infrastructure fund, we really do have cause for concern. In that case, the agreement was two years late because Ottawa wanted to impose conditions, so that was a job well done, as usual.

There is also cause for concern because, as my colleague mentioned, Quebec only got about \$1 billion, when the total envelope was \$6 billion. My colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue is much smarter than I am, but we still have the same numbers. As he said, that represents 16% of the envelope, which is far less than Quebec's demographic weight in Canada, which is about 22%.

The Union des municipalités du Québec has estimated that Quebec should have received \$1.3 billion, but it received \$1 billion. That means there is a shortfall of \$300 million. I am used to speaking in the House. It will soon be seven years. I am used to it. I always say that when something is good, we vote for it, and when it is not good, we vote against it. I am talking about Quebec, of course. In this case, we will vote in favour of the bill. We would have liked to have voted in favour of the bill sooner. We would have liked to have done so following a proper parliamentary and democratic debate, without debate being curtailed.

I do not understand the government's position on this matter, and that is unfortunate, but we will be there. We will carry on. We will be there just to be there, as former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau used to say. We will be there just to be there.

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● (2225)

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the last point, we just introduced the bill, on Thursday, for some debate time. The first Conservative member to speak to it spoke for two hours and 45 minutes, which was a good sign, given that the Conservatives oppose the legislation. They have no intention of passing the legislation. If we had not brought in this process, we would never be able to pass the legislation. The member opposite says that he supports the legislation, and he is criticizing us for not passing it soon enough.

The roots of my family tree, my ancestry, go back to the beautiful province of Quebec, a province of which I am very proud. I want Quebec to succeed in a wonderful Canadian federation where we have collaboration, whether the federal government is working with the Quebec government or the City of Montreal, on building homes and building projects.

I wonder if the member could provide—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I am going to do what the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons does during question period. I am going to deflect the question and not answer it.

My colleague across the way forgets one thing. I imagine he knows his history. In 1870, when Manitoba joined the Canadian Confederation, 50% of its population was francophone. Today, the francophone population is about 2.5% to 2.7%. Why is that? It is because, for years, Manitoba laws prohibited French instruction in public schools.

My colleague opposite has a French last name. I will not name him, since I am not allowed to. Today, however, he does not speak French. Do members know why he does not speak French? It is because learning French in school was prohibited.

It is because of the Canadian Confederation that the member opposite now speaks English rather than French.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what the member does not recognize is that since the Province of Quebec changed the law, there are more people speaking French today.

We can go into schools in areas that I represent, like Meadows West and Sisler High, and we will find members of Filipino and Punjabi heritage being able to speak multiple languages. There is a great sense of pride in Manitoba today. My family goes from the province of Quebec to St-Pierre-Jolys in Manitoba. St-Pierre-Jolys is very French. Members can go to St. Boniface, which is a French community. Signs are there.

Never before in the history of Canada has French been spoken more in Quebec. Does the member see that as a good thing?

● (2230)

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, these people had to fight to speak French. They had to hide to speak French. They were forbidden from speaking French at school. It was prohibited under Manitoban law.

I recently attended the International Uyghur Forum in Berlin. While I was there, I met the prime minister of Tibet in exile, who told me that day schools and residential schools currently exist in China where Tibetans are prohibited from learning Tibetan. He told me that it was like what we lived through in Canada, in Manitoba and Ontario.

The prime minister in exile of the Parliament of Tibet used Canada as an example of mass, coercive francophone assimilation. The member opposite is proud of that. He is proud that he lost his language. His family lost its language because of a ban on learning French in his birth province. It is incredible.

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, here we are discussing a bill that concerns unconditional transfers to the provinces and the topic of Manitoba comes up. I find that interesting.

I had the opportunity to visit its legislative assembly in late summer. Interestingly, Louis Riel has finally been recognized as Manitoba's first premier.

I am drawing a blank. I would like my colleague to remind us what the federal government did to Louis Riel. I think the matter is relevant to a study of this bill.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, what happened was that he was hanged. I am not kidding. Louis Riel was hanged because he was fighting for his people.

There are statues standing today. Liberal hero Sir John A. Macdonald had Louis Riel hanged. Today, some members opposite rise in celebration of Sir John A. Macdonald. It is unbelievable. A member for Manitoba is applauding Sir John A. Macdonald, who hanged a man who was fighting for his people and for his language.

[English]

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-26, at 10:33 p.m. This will be the last time members of Parliament will get to debate the bill because the government has brought down the guillotine to shut down debate.

What is this bill? It is an act to authorize certain payments to be made out of the consolidated revenue fund for the purpose of improving housing supply. That sounds good.

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At the outset, let me say this clearly. Canada is not just facing a housing crisis; it is facing a housing affordability crisis. It is not a future housing crisis but a housing affordability crisis right now, which has only gotten worse on the government's watch. Across the country, people are working harder than ever and falling further behind. Young people who have done everything society has asked them to do, studied hard, gotten a job and saved money, are wondering if they will ever be able to afford a home. Families are spending larger and larger portions of their income on rent. Seniors are being priced out of the communities they helped build. Students are sleeping on couches and living in overcrowded housing. More Canadians are finding themselves on the brink of homelessness. In cities and towns across this country, homelessness continues to rise. This is the reality. This is the crisis. It demands serious action.

New Democrats believe government has an obligation to act. We believe public investment has a role to play. We believe Canada must build more housing. We believe governments must be ambitious, but ambition alone is not enough. Public money must achieve public outcomes, including affordability. That is where this bill, Bill C-26, fails. This legislation would authorize the expenditure of \$1.713 billion of public funds, yet despite spending more than \$1.7 billion, the bill itself contains almost no meaningful safeguards, no measurable affordability requirements and no clear accountability mechanisms.

There are no requirements for affordable housing. There are no requirements for non-market housing. There are no requirements for co-operative housing. There are no requirements for public housing. There are no requirements for indigenous housing. There are no requirements for accessible housing. There are no requirements for rental affordability. There are no requirements that any homes created as a result of this funding remain affordable for future generations. There are none whatsoever. Instead, Parliament would be asked to authorize \$1.713 billion dollars and then hand enormous discretion to the Minister of Finance to determine where the money goes and under what conditions.

This is not accountability. This is centralization. Parliament would be asked to write a cheque and hope for the best. New Democrats do not believe that is good enough. If Canadians are investing \$1.7 billion, Canadians deserve to know what they are getting in return. Would rents become more affordable? Would homelessness decline? Would social housing waiting lists shrink? Would more co-op housing be built? Would more affordable homes be available to workers, seniors and young families? The bill does not answer any of these questions. This is because Bill C-26 reveals something important about how the Prime Minister understands the housing crisis.

The government says this bill is about supply, but Canadians are not suffering from a shortage of supply. They are suffering from a shortage of affordable supply. These are not the same thing. A luxury condominium counts as supply. A speculative investment property counts as supply. An empty condominium tower counts as supply. None of those things necessarily creates affordability. The question is not whether units are being built. The question is who those units are being built for. The question is whether ordinary people can afford them. The question is whether housing is being treated as a home or as a financial asset.

If members read the government's own background documents, something very revealing emerges. The government is concerned about inventory. The government is concerned about sales. The government is concerned about construction activity. The government is concerned about market conditions. The government is concerned about what might happen if inventories increase and housing markets slow down.

● (2235)

Those are all legitimate matters for economists to discuss, but where in the government's framework do we see the issue of affordability or the issue of homelessness? Where do we see social housing wait-lists? Where do we see renter poverty? Where do we see overcrowding? Where do we see indigenous housing needs? Where do we see housing insecurity? Where do we see affordability outcomes? What we see instead is a framework built around market indicators. That tells us something important: that the government is measuring market distress. New Democrats are measuring human distress. Those are very different things.

Canadians deserve honesty from this House. The concern reflected in Bill C-26 is not simply that people cannot find housing. The concern reflected in Bill C-26 is that inventories are rising. The concern reflected in Bill C-26 is that sales are slowing. The concern reflected in Bill C-26 is that construction activity may decline. The concern reflected in Bill C-26 is that housing markets are cooling. Those are not the same thing.

A family facing eviction is experiencing a housing crisis. A senior who cannot afford rent is experiencing a housing crisis. A young worker paying half their income to a landlord is experiencing a housing crisis. A worker sleeping in their car is experiencing a housing crisis. A student sleeping in their car is experiencing a housing crisis. A student couch surfing is experiencing a housing crisis. A developer sitting on unsold luxury condominiums is experiencing a market problem. Those are not the same thing, yet this legislation increasingly treats them as though they are.

This is the central flaw of Bill C-26. The government has confused the health of the housing market with the well-being of the people who depend upon housing.

Canadians have seen this movie before. For years, Canadians have been told that if we support the market, affordability will follow. When housing became increasingly financialized and profiteering became the name of the game, we were told affordability would follow. When corporate investors expanded their presence in housing, we were told affordability would follow. When housing prices skyrocketed, we were told affordability would follow. When rents exploded, we were told affordability would follow. When an entire generation found itself locked out of home ownership, we were told affordability would follow.

Today, Canadians are hearing the same message once again: Trust the market, support the market, subsidize the market, and somehow affordability will follow. Canadians have waited long enough. The evidence is in: That experiment has failed. It has failed young people. It has failed renters. It has failed workers. It has failed seniors. It has failed communities across Canada.

The private market builds housing where profits are highest. The private market does not automatically build housing where the need is the greatest. That is why we can have luxury towers sitting empty while homelessness rises. That is why we can have speculative investment properties while families struggle to find housing. That is why we can have thousands of vacant units and thousands of un-housed people in the same city at the same time. This is not a natural phenomenon. This is a policy choice. It is the predictable outcome of treating housing as an asset class instead of a human right.

Let us consider what is happening in metro Vancouver. According to publicly reported figures, approximately 2,500 completed condominiums are currently sitting vacant and unsold. The number has doubled compared with the previous year. Analysts estimate that it could rise significantly further. Think about what that means. Thousands of homes already exist, thousands of homes have already been built, yet people cannot afford them.

● (2240)

At the same time, homelessness remains a serious challenge, renters are struggling and working families are being priced out. The problem is not simply a lack of units; it is affordability. The problem is that housing is increasingly being built as an investment product rather than a social necessity, and that housing has become financialized. Unless we address the financialization, we will continue to produce housing outcomes that fail ordinary Canadians.

There is another example that deserves attention. A major residential tower development in Vancouver recently entered receivership after significant financial difficulties and a loan default involving more than \$100 million. An institutional lender stepped in, receivers were appointed and creditors moved to recover their investment. Now, I want to be clear, I am not criticizing construction workers, pension beneficiaries or workers whose retirement savings are invested through pension funds. However, this is an example that reveals something important. Parts of the housing development sector are experiencing financial distress. Sales are slowing, inventories are rising, financing is becoming more difficult, projects are becoming riskier, and Canadians have every right to ask a simple question: Is Bill C-26 designed to solve the housing crisis Canadians face, or is it designed to stabilize a development model facing increasing financial pressure?

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When I read the government's own rationale, I see repeated concerns about inventory, market conditions and construction activity. What I do not see is an equal concern for affordability, and that should concern every member of this House.

There is another problem with this bill: the allocation formula itself. Ontario received \$875 million, Quebec received \$320 million, B.C. received \$284 million, meanwhile, Manitoba received \$10 million, Saskatchewan received \$10 million, New Brunswick received \$10 million, and Newfoundland and Labrador received \$10 million. The government has chosen to distribute funding based largely on housing market indicators. Imagine if we allocated funding based on need, homelessness or renters' needs. Imagine if we allocated funding based on social housing wait-lists, housing insecurity, indigenous housing needs or renter distress. The results would almost certainly look different. This formula is not built around human need; it is built around market conditions. This is an ideological choice, and New Democrats disagree with it.

There is a larger issue at stake. For decades, governments of different political stripes have steadily reduced Canada's commitment to non-market housing. When I say different political stripes, I mean Liberals and Conservatives. The result is that Canada has one of the smallest non-market housing sectors across many developed countries. We sold the idea that private markets would deliver affordability. Instead, we got speculation, financialization, corporate concentration, rising rents, rising home prices and a housing crisis. Surely the lesson is obvious. We cannot solve a housing crisis created by excessive reliance on the market by relying even more heavily on the market.

We need a different approach. We need a major expansion of non-market housing and co-op housing. We need public housing construction, acquisition funds to preserve existing affordable housing, indigenous-led housing solutions and stronger tenant protections. We need affordability requirements attached to public funding, and we need to ensure that every public dollar creates a lasting public benefit.

At the end of the day, this debate comes down to a simple question: Who is the government supposed to work for? When renters are struggling, government should stand with renters. When young people are locked out of home ownership, government should stand with young people. When seniors are worried about keeping a roof over their heads, government should stand with seniors. When families cannot afford housing, governments should stand with families.

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• (2245)

That should be the test; not whether inventories are optimized, not whether markets are stabilized and not whether investors are reassured. Whether people can afford a place to live is the key. Government programs should not be designed to bail out big developers. That is the test, and Bill C-26 fails it. This bill tells us how much money would be spent. This bill tells us where some of that money would go. However, it never tells Canadians what they would receive in return. There would be no affordability guarantees, no social housing targets, no public ownership requirements and no measurable affordability outcomes, nothing. It is just \$1.7 billion and a promise that the market would somehow work things out. We have heard that promise before, and after decades of hearing it, Canada now faces the worst housing affordability crisis in generations. When a former central banker designs housing policy, it looks like Bill C-26 and it clearly misses the mark. It misses the human impact of housing affordability.

New Democrats believe that there is a better path. We believe that housing is a basic human right. We believe that public money should serve public purposes. We believe that housing policy should be judged by outcomes for people, not outcomes for investors. We believe that if taxpayers assume the risk, they deserve affordability in return. We believe that if public money is invested, the public should own part of that outcome. We believe that if government is serious about housing affordability, then affordability cannot be optional.

There are two ways to spend \$1.7 billion. We can spend it protecting the housing market or we can spend it protecting Canadians from the housing market. Bill C-26 chooses the first path. New Democrats believe parliamentarians should choose the second, always putting people before profits. That is what we are here to talk about with respect to this bill. Somehow, the government misses the mark.

Before this bill came to this critical stage where the government is bringing forward a guillotine motion to ram through the bill without proper debate in the House, I had a briefing with officials. I asked the officials, “What is the funding allocation? What is the formula? How did they determine who gets how much money?” At that briefing, they said that they could not provide that information to me. They were actually not going to share that information. What they really wanted was for me, for the New Democrats and for members of the House to agree on a unanimous consent motion to pass through all the stages—

• (2250)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I need to interrupt the member.

The hon. member for Mirabel.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, it seems there is some sort of party going on in the Liberal lobby. Perhaps it would be appropriate to ask them to quiet down, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I would like to thank the hon. member for Mirabel for his point of order. I did in-

deed hear the noise as well, and it was a problem earlier this evening. We will look into the matter to ensure there is less noise.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that intervention. It is kind of outrageous, is it not? We are here at 10:50 p.m., and the Liberals are partying in the lobby area.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, there seems to be an unholy alliance between the few New Democrats and the Bloc members. There is absolutely nothing wrong—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): That is not a point of order.

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, to the point where they are making disruptive noises that interfere with the debate in the House, that is inappropriate.

Let me just conclude my comments here. The government wants to ram this through. The Liberals want unanimous consent from all the parties to somehow magically just support them in whatever they want to do, but we actually want accountability. We want the government to deliver results for the people, for Canada, for Canadians who are struggling with the housing crisis, not just to hand over cheques without accountability measures. That is the difference. The market will not fix the problem. What will fix the problem is a policy choice of investing in the people and for people ahead of profits.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to realize that Bill C-26 is not the holistic approach that the government is actually taking. It is a part of the housing file that the government is advancing, a very important part.

There is a huge difference, suffice it to say, between the Liberals and today's New Democrats. We believe that there is a role for the marketplace. We believe that by working collaboratively with provinces, even New Democratic provinces and progressive Conservative provinces, and all different levels of government, we can actually have a positive outcome. By using the legislation, providing the funds and working with the Province of Ontario, thousands of Ontarians would benefit from—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I was once actually in government at the provincial level, at a time when the federal Liberal government cancelled the national affordable housing program. What did New Democrats do provincially? We continued to deliver housing in spite of that. When I was elected and became a cabinet minister, what did we do? We actually grew the money from the Province of British Columbia alone, with the private sector, with the non-profit sector, with municipalities and with everybody else who would partner with us, except for the federal government, which walked away.

Guess what. We grew that money from 600 units to 1,200 units and then to 2,000 units, with the same amount of money. Yes, we believe in the market, but what we also believe in is making sure that we drive the market to deliver for the people, especially when it gets a benefit from taxpayers. That is unlike the current Liberal government. What did it do? It gave money hand over fist to the development sector, to the market, and thought that somehow, magically, affordable housing would appear on its own. Guess what. It did not.

• (2255)

Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from British Columbia raises a question about what the outcomes are for \$1.7 billion in funding that we are supposed to approve in the House, based on a two-paragraph bill.

Did the hon. member find in any place in the bill, or in what she has read about it, any sort of targets in terms of the housing, whether it is deeply affordable housing or otherwise, that would be built with the \$1.7 billion?

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, that is precisely the point. There would be no accountability measures. There would be nothing to which one can say that using \$1.7 billion of taxpayers' money would generate a specific return for the people in Canada. There would be zero accountability measures and zero targets. There is none of that information whatsoever in the bill.

As I was saying earlier, I was trying to get from the government what exactly the allocation would be and what the formula is that the government used to decide how to divide the money between

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the provinces and territories. The Liberals could not even give me that. It was after much to-do, when they were desperate to try to get a unanimous consent motion through, that they then came forward with that information.

Guess what. A whole bunch of provinces would be getting only \$10 million out of this. That would not address the housing crisis, would it? The government just says, "Trust us. We will fix it." Oh, will it really?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): There being no further members wishing to speak, pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

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

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we would request a recorded vote, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 17, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that, if you were to check the House, there would be unanimous consent to adjourn at this time.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Tuesday, June 9, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10:58 p.m.)

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