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Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, January 29, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)
[*English*]

PROTECTING VICTIMS ACT

The House resumed from January 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-16, An Act to amend certain Acts in relation to criminal and correctional matters (child protection, gender-based violence, delays and other measures), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is quite something that after 10 years of tearing down our criminal justice system and throwing victims of crime under the bus, suddenly the Liberals want to appear to be the heroes of their own story.

One crime I regularly speak about is human trafficking. It is a heinous and growing crime right here in Canada, and it is having an impact on victims all across Canada. Non-government organizations and law enforcement have been devastated by the changes the Liberals have made over the last number of years.

In December a trafficker was arrested in Lethbridge, Alberta, after the police responded to a girl in medical distress. They found a 14-year-old girl, along with two other girls, ages 15 and 16. All had been confined for days, and the youngest had been drugged and exploited by other men. At his court hearing, Skye Atoa was released on bail thanks to the Liberal bail system. Thankfully the police were waiting and rearrested him 30 minutes after his court hearing, for breaching the conditions of his bail.

More recently the Alberta RCMP arrested a man from Brooks, Chad Jensen, for sex trafficking offences. He is facing eight charges, including two counts of sexual assault and two counts of trafficking, and the police believe there are more victims. Guess what happened. He was immediately given bail.

I do not think it is too much to ask that we could live in a country that does not release child traffickers on bail. A Conservative government would fix these bail problems and ensure that human traffickers face justice.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, what we have witnessed from the Conservatives is their not responding to what Canadians are asking them to do, including Canadians in Conservative ridings. What we have witnessed over the last number of months is a Conservative Party that continues to want to filibuster. Interestingly enough, they finally say they are going to pass Bill C-14, the bail reform legislation, which is a very important part of the government's agenda. We could have passed it in December. Fingers are crossed; hopefully they will pass it.

Does the member not recognize this as an important part of the whole crime package? Canadians want it. Can he give his personal assurance that he would like the legislation to pass before the end of February?

Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I find that incredibly rich coming from the member, who adamantly defended Bill C-5 and Bill C-75 in previous Parliaments and also defended the carbon tax. Now, with a new leader in front of the Liberal Party, suddenly he and the Liberals are going to do a complete 180° on all these things and change them.

The reality is that the Liberals had the opportunity to pass Bill C-14, the bail reform bill that would fix their own problems, in the last Parliament. They did not bring it forward at committee; therefore, there was no opportunity to pass it in the last Parliament.

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, emotions are running high in this debate. We are thinking about all the women who have been victims of femicide and the fact that femicides are on the rise. The bill does contain one measure that women's groups have long been calling for. On their behalf, I spearheaded a study on the criminalization of coercive control at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Bill C-16 paves the way. What does my colleague think about that?

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Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I recall that in the last Parliament there was a bill precisely to deal with coercive control. I seconded that bill and am disappointed that the government has not adopted it wholesale. I know this has been an ongoing issue over the last number of years. There was another bill in the last Parliament that the Liberals voted against as well that I was hoping they would take on; it was around the element of fear required in order to press charges for human trafficking. We should not have to examine the heads of victims to determine whether they are being human trafficked.

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the intervention from the member for Winnipeg North requires a little more unpacking.

I will put it to the member for Peace River—Westlock that it is in fact the government. The member for Winnipeg North is the parliamentary secretary to the House Leader. The government House leader has tremendous control over the agenda of this place, and the fact that the government cannot get or have not yet had Bill C-14 approved says everything about the priorities of the government, which was more content to have protracted debate around Bill C-9 than to get on with Bill C-14.

Would the member for Peace River—Westlock like to further unpack where the responsibility is for the absence of meaningful bail reform to fix the system that the Liberals broke?

Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Liberals are the government. They do control the agenda of this place. It is incumbent entirely upon them to schedule these things.

I would like to remind the Liberals, in addition, that they have a minority government and that they should be working with opposition parties to pass things we mutually agree upon. Fixes to Liberal bail has been something that, apparently, the Liberals agreed with us on. It should have been the first thing they put on the agenda, rather than muddying the waters with a bunch of other bills.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear. I at one time asked if we could sit for a couple extra weeks until midnight, and the Conservatives said no. The Conservative Party of Canada is the reason we do not have bail reform or bail legislation today.

Will the member apologize for misleading Canadians on that point?

Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, that is bullocks. The Liberals entirely have the control of this place in terms of scheduling. The member should look in the mirror, and perhaps he should figure out which way he is going, as he has reversed his position on a number of things over the last years.

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to take this opportunity to recognize Waves of Changes for Autism, a charity in Vaughan that is celebrating its 10th anniversary. I would like to congratulate Ellen Contardi and her entire board for all their efforts over the years.

Waves of Changes for Autism helps families that have children with autism. It helps them offset the cost of therapies. It has funded over 700 applications and has raised over \$2.5 million since 2016. Since its inception, it has made sure that every single dollar has had

an impact. In 2026 we dedicate this milestone by marking a decade of hope, a decade of opportunity and a decade of giving. Again, I congratulate Waves of Changes for Autism.

It is an honour to rise today to discuss a very important issue in our country related to public safety. Canadians expect Parliament to approach criminal law with seriousness and humility. Our decisions have the utmost real-life impacts on Canadians. They determine how we protect victims, how we hold offenders to account and whether people feel safe in their home and in their community. That responsibility demands clarity, discipline and honesty. Bill C-16 would meet that standard in many important respects. In others, it would not.

I want to be clear from the outset. I have witnessed, upon returning to Ottawa in this winter session, the falsehoods coming from the Liberal government: that Conservatives are obstructing legislation on public safety. Many of the victim-focused provisions come directly from legislation introduced by my Conservative colleagues prior to the introduction of Bill C-16.

Making the murder of an intimate partner automatically first-degree was a measure first proposed by my Conservative colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola in Bill C-225. Expanding the offence prohibiting the non-consensual distribution of intimate images to capture sexually explicit deepfakes draws directly from my Conservative colleague's bill, the member of Parliament for Calgary Nose Hill's bill, Bill C-216. Of course, updating the mandatory reporting requirements for child sex exploitation material legislation was originally enacted by a previous Conservative government and later modernized through Conservative initiatives.

We support these measures. We have supported them consistently. We have called for them long before the government had decided that public safety had become politically inconvenient to ignore. That context matters because Canadians are being told a story by the Liberal government. They are being told that Conservatives are blocking progress. They are being told that we are unwilling to move legislation forward, and they are being told that democratic debate amounts to indifference toward victims. That narrative collapses under even modest scrutiny.

Allow me to highlight the case of Bill C-14, the Liberals' bail reform legislation. We all know that for years Conservatives have been calling on the government to get tough on crime and tough on repeat offenders. Bill C-14, while not going far enough, is better than what we have now. It would not address the underlying issue of removing the principle of restraint from Bill C-5 and Bill C-75, which is leading to the catch-and-release issues we are plagued with today.

Since the Liberals are making their rounds in the media, suggesting we are obstructing bail reform, for the people watching at home let me highlight how the Liberals play politics with crime. The Liberals finally introduced their bail reform legislation on October 23. On November 18 they went to committee. Instead of advancing the legislation at committee so it could get expert testimony and be sent back to the House of Commons for a vote and be passed, from November 18 all the way to January 27 they chose to prioritize a different bill, Bill C-9, and support a Bloc amendment that attacks freedom of expression and religious freedom, an amendment they knew we could not support.

We asked 20 times before the Christmas break for bail reform to be moved ahead, but this was denied. Why? The Liberals did so in order to advance a narrative that because we are fighting back against Bill C-9 and their attacks on freedom of expression, we are therefore obstructing bail reform. That, ladies and gentlemen, is a perfect example of how Liberals are playing politics with public safety.

• (1010)

Conservatives have been calling for stronger responses to violent crime, which is up 55%; to human trafficking, which is up 84%; and to sexual assaults, which have gone up 76% in this country since the Liberal government took office. We did so when the government dismissed rising crime as a perception problem. We still have former Liberal members of Parliament, like the one from Vaughan—Woodbridge, suggesting that crime is just a perception problem by using year-over-year statistics instead of a multi-year average to look at the actual trends. We did so while Liberals repealed mandatory penalties, expanded constitutional sentences and pursued a bail framework that has left communities, including Vaughan, less safe.

Bill C-16 combines measures that strengthen public safety with a sweeping restructuring of sentencing law that is fundamentally weakening Parliament's role. That is the problem and that is why the bill should, indeed, be split. The creation of coercive or controlling conduct offences within intimate relationships is a serious and necessary reform. Earlier intervention before abuse escalates into severe violence or homicide is very important. Conservatives support this approach. The expansion of deepfake offences is necessary to respond to modern forms of sexual exploitation. Conservatives support this as well. The procedural reforms aimed at reducing trial delays deserve careful study. Justice delayed serves neither the accused nor the victim. Conservatives are prepared to engage constructively on those provisions.

However, embedded within the bill is a sentencing provision that does not belong with the rest. It is a provision that would transform mandatory minimum penalties into discretionary suggestions. It is a

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provision that would apply across almost the entire Criminal Code. It is a provision that would fundamentally alter how Parliament expresses denunciation for the most serious crimes. Under Bill C-16, judges would be required to impose a sentence below the mandatory minimum whenever applying the minimum would amount to cruel and unusual punishment for the offender. That provision would apply to nearly every mandatory minimum in federal law, excluding only murder and high treason.

In practical terms, mandatory minimums would no longer be mandatory at all. That includes offences such as aggravated sexual assault with a firearm, human trafficking, extortion with a firearm, weapons trafficking, drive-by shootings and multiple other firearms offences. Parliament set these penalties deliberately, not casually or symbolically, because certain conduct is so dangerous, so destructive and so harmful that incarceration was deemed to be the baseline, not the exception.

The Supreme Court has never held that mandatory minimum penalties are unconstitutional per se. It has never stripped Parliament of its authority to impose them. Section 12 of the charter prohibits punishment that is "grossly disproportionate". The House should pay close attention to what the court actually said, particularly in *Quebec (Attorney General) v. Senneville*. In that case, the court was sharply divided. The majority relied on hypothetical scenarios to invalidate mandatory minimum penalties for child sex exploitation offences, but the dissent, led by Chief Justice Wagner, issued a warning that Parliament would be reckless to ignore.

That dissent reaffirmed a foundational principle. Hypotheticals must be reasonable. They must have a real, factual and legal connection to the offence before the court. Parliament is not required to legislate for the least serious imaginable application of an offence. Using remote or extreme hypotheticals to dismantle sentencing floors risks undermining democratic accountability itself. Those words matter.

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Bill C-16 ignores that warning entirely. Instead of responding to Senneville with discipline by clarifying offence definitions or crafting a narrow and targeted safety valve, the government chose the most expansive option available. It used a contested decision as justification for wholesale retreat from Parliament's sentencing authority. The government will point to law enforcement organizations and victim advocacy groups that have welcomed parts of the bill. Conservatives respect those voices. We listen to them and we agree with them on many of the reforms contained within the bill. However, broad support for certain provisions does not mean Parliament should abandon its duty to scrutinize the whole.

Millions of Canadians voted for the official opposition to do precisely that: Hold the government to account, improve legislation and demand excellence, especially on matters of public safety. Conservatives stand ready to work. We stand ready to improve this legislation. Of course, we stand firmly on the side of victims, communities and public safety.

• (1015)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear. The Conservatives have not been supportive of getting legislation passed. I will give us the ideal example of Bill C-14. The Prime Minister and 70 new Liberal members were elected. The government said that bail reform legislation was critically important. We did the consultations, and the provinces, law enforcement and other stakeholders brought forward the legislation. The Conservative Party of Canada is the reason it has never passed. It is as simple as that.

We are now talking about Bill C-16, which is, again, important crime legislation. The Conservatives are coming up with excuses as to why they do not want to see it pass.

Will the member opposite agree that it is time for the Conservative Party to allow Canadians' crime agenda to pass? After all, even Canadians in Conservative ridings want this type of legislation to pass. Will the Conservative Party commit to passing the legislation before the end of February?

Michael Guglielmin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that statement, although, unfortunately, much of it is placed in some alternate universe that must exist out there. As everyone is well aware, Conservatives have been advocating for a tough-on-crime agenda for years at this point.

We supported sending Bill C-14 to committee for study, yet it was put behind Bill C-9. Then the Liberals decided to use their time to try to ram through attacks on freedom of expression. Why? We called for that bill to be moved ahead [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

• (1020)

SITTING SUSPENDED

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): We will have to pause momentarily.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 10:20 a.m.)

• (1030)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 10:31 a.m.)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I think the problem has been sorted out. We will continue. We were on questions and comments. The question had been asked. I will invite the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge to respond to the most recent question.

* * *

PROTECTING VICTIMS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-16, An Act to amend certain Acts in relation to criminal and correctional matters (child protection, gender-based violence, delays and other measures), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the hon. member for his comments, although they seem to be derived from an alternate universe. The facts on the ground are that Conservatives have always supported and advocated for tougher sentencing laws and have wanted the government to get tough on crime.

Bill C-14 was introduced on October 23. We advanced that bill to committee on November 18 with the understanding that it would be moved quickly through committee so it could be passed into law. The government then decided to ram Bill C-9 through and support a Bloc amendment that attacked freedom of expression. All this is to say that, because we are defending freedom of expression, we are therefore obstructing bail reform.

Conservatives have always been in support of tougher crime laws, and what Canadians need to ask themselves is why. The Liberals broke the bail laws to begin with. We are here to—

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

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is true that there are a lot of measures in Bill C-16. That is why it will be important to carefully study the bill in committee.

Earlier, I spoke about the work that I did to spearhead a study in committee. I have been advocating for years about the importance of revisiting the issue of coercive control and criminalizing it. I have been waging this battle at the request of the Quebec National Assembly. Finally, we have something about that in this bill.

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My colleague from Rivière-du-Nord has been waging another battle, that of creating guidelines for the application of the Jordan decision. My colleague spoke about that in his speech. As a result of the Jordan decision, some offenders got away with their crimes, even in cases of assault, because of court delays. The women who appeared before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women were very critical of that.

I will close by commenting on a situation that I found very concerning. A woman came to share her experience with us. She spoke mainly about the importance of developing criteria for the application of the Jordan decision. In her case, because of unreasonable delays, her abuser got off scot-free under the Jordan decision. However, to be frank, rather than actually listening to the victim, the Liberals and the Conservatives dug in their heels and played petty politics at committee.

[*English*]

Michael Guglielmin: Mr. Speaker, we have supported, and are in favour of, these provisions in the bill.

Just to be clear, we think the bill needs to be split, specifically around the provisions with respect to mandatory minimums, because the bill is essentially a test. What it would do is open up for debate, again, all past rulings where a particular sentencing was deemed unconstitutional. It would remove the guardrails Parliament has, remove the instructions from Parliament and create more delays and more litigation. This is something that needs to be clarified in the bill.

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that Canadians, and Canadian municipalities in particular, have been crying for help from the Liberals for years. They have been burdened with crime and criminals walking the streets.

Why does the member think this is suddenly such an important issue for the Liberals? They have finally put it on the agenda, as if it were something brand new they had never heard of before.

• (1035)

Michael Guglielmin: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' own ideology has finally gotten in the way because public safety has become too politically inconvenient for them to ignore.

As I said earlier, we have been advocating for tougher sentencing laws and bail reform for years at this point. We are ready to advance bail legislation. We are ready to get serious on cracking down on crime and criminals, keeping them behind bars where they belong.

Conservatives will always stand up for public safety.

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are debating Bill C-16, and in doing so, we need to first set out some of the context for why we are having this debate, how we got here and where we are right now as a society in Canada.

One of the unfortunate outcomes of this past 10 years of Liberal government has been a measurable, significant rise in the incidence of crime in Canada. This is not an opinion. This is measured by Statistics Canada and many other observers. In every category of crime, the rate is up after 10 years of the Liberal government. Some

of the crimes for which the rates are up spectacularly, in such a negative way, are violent crime on transit systems in our cities, extortion and violent crime. We have seen an increased incidence in the murder of police officers. These are really serious and troubling crimes that Canadians are very concerned about.

How did we get here? Well, the government undertook very specific legislative changes that have affected the incidence of crime in our cities and towns and in all places across Canada. In the 42nd Parliament, the Liberals brought in Bill C-75, which was the catch-and-release bail law change. That is not just a clever political phrase. It is literally what that bill did to our system. The government brought in and legislated the principle of minimum restraint and compelled by law the principle that judges must always apply minimum restraint. Therefore, this plays itself out in our courts, where people are arrested and released and rearrested and released and rearrested and released and so forth.

Police forces across Canada all know who the small number of criminals who commit a disproportionate number of offences are, and they can do nothing about it other than rearrest and rearrest. Officials at the City of Vancouver say there are 40 individuals who are responsible for 6,000 annual police interactions. These are people who are arrested over and over again, literally an average of more than three times a week for this small group of criminals. This is the principle of minimum restraint working itself out in the streets of our cities, and every other city police department has a similar story. I have talked to many police officers in my city who affirm this is the case in our community as well.

During the summer before last, I spoke to people at the city police chief's office in Calgary and heard about a series of home invasions where police arrested the same person, the leader of a group of people who were breaking into homes at three o'clock or four o'clock in the morning. When someone breaks into a house at four o'clock in the morning, that is a home invasion. They are expecting the homeowner to be in their bed at that hour. The police figured out who was doing it, they arrested the suspects, and they were released and were able to do the same offence the same week, were rearrested for the same offence, and on it goes.

The other concrete step the government took that has had the result of increasing, or failing to address, crime in Canada was Bill C-5 in the 44th Parliament. In that Parliament, the Liberals passed a bill that stripped away mandatory minimum penalties for a host of offences, including serious drug and firearms offences.

• (1040)

That is where we are today. We have a measurable, demonstrative increase in crime after decades of falling incidence of crime. We had for the first time in many decades a rise in crime over a 10-year period, and the response of the government during that time was to make it easier for criminals to get out of jail and harder for judges to send repeat violent offenders into custodial sentences.

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Here we are today debating Bill C-16, and it contains measures that Canadians and Conservatives have indeed been demanding for years and that we have asked for through private members' legislation from the Conservative benches. The member for Calgary Nose Hill had a bill in the last Parliament to ban artificial deepfakes of intimate images and the circulation thereof, to include that in the Criminal Code and to compel Internet service providers to report incidents of child sex abuse material. The member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola proposed, through a private member's bill, the automatic first-degree charge for murder of an intimate partner.

These are things we have proactively suggested to the government, and we are pleased that it has adopted these measures. We are pleased that the government is at least talking about the bottlenecks in the system and that it is introducing legislation about coercive control and about restoring or preserving mandatory minimum penalties. Is it, though?

This bill contains a carve-out that many observers, including prosecutors, suggest would in fact do nothing to protect mandatory minimum penalties, including ones that have been upheld by the Supreme Court for decades and that have been introduced by successive Liberal and Conservative governments exercising their democratic responsibility to determine, as elected officials, what power the state would have to incarcerate somebody for serious crime.

The carve-out contained in this bill may well undo mandatory minimum penalties that currently exist and that have been upheld, while failing to reinstate them in many other cases that the public is demanding, so this bill has problems. This bill is not a panacea to deal with this problem. It really is worth reminding Canadians why we are here.

It has come to my attention that I forgot at the outset to state that I will share my time with the member for Richmond Hill South. I am thankful for the reminder of that, because I am looking forward to his remarks as well.

The carve-out in this bill would potentially take the power of the people of Canada who elect their representatives to come to this place and to determine what the penalties should be for heinous, terrible offences, and turn them into mere guidelines. There are these hypotheticals they always come up with. I was here for the debate on Bill C-5 when David Lametti came up with an outrageous, and actually quite arrogant and offensive, scenario that he imagined for why there should not be a mandatory minimum sentence for the dangerous use of a firearm with intent.

We see this from the Liberals, their trying to imagine a circumstance rather than dealing with the concrete. It goes to an approach, and we do not agree with that approach. That approach is what has gotten us here. I hope Bill C-16 will be examined thoroughly. Probably it will need to be amended, but at the end, we will get to where we need to be and restore the power of Parliament to determine mandatory minimum penalties for serious crime.

• (1045)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we must recognize that Bill C-16 would actually reinstate

mandatory minimums. It would put in a safety valve so that we would be charter-compliant. The Conservative member from Kamloops, who sits right in front of that member, has actually advocated in the past on the need for a safety valve.

The Conservative Party, much like it is doing with Bill C-14, wants to continue to prevent the legislative agenda from passing. I have asked one of the member's colleagues, and now I will ask the member: Would he, or the Conservative Party, agree that it is part of a crime package including Bill C-14 and make a commitment, at least a personal commitment, to allow this legislation to pass all readings before the end of February?

Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, it is funny how the member wants me to commit to a series of things that his own House leader has most of the control over, which is when a bill is going to pass in this place.

I do not know when the Liberals are going to call the bill. We have already seen what they have done at the justice committee with Bill C-14, which was expeditiously referred to the committee only to languish there while they played politics with Bill C-9. The member is determined to blame the opposition for the Liberals' inability to manage the parliamentary calendar.

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by noting that Quebec's fourth femicide tragically took place in the riding of Shefford. My thoughts are with Véronic Champagne's family and loved ones. A vigil was held in Rougemont.

I was really struck by what one of her friends said in an interview. She said that femicide is one of the most easily preventable crimes, because there are often warning signs. This brings me back to the issue of coercive control. In committee, we heard that, until coercive control is recognized in the Criminal Code, police officers will lack the key tools to intervene more quickly and proactively, before the situation escalates to femicide.

My question is very simple, essential and important. What does my colleague think about what came out of the committee?

[*English*]

Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I did not really have time to go through all of the bill, as it is a pretty big bill, so I am glad the member brought that portion of it to my attention in this debate and is allowing me a moment to comment on it.

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Yes, we agree and stand with victims. Yes, we know there are many signs, and we never want to see scenarios where someone is murdered and everybody who knows the scenario or the family, whether it is the police or the neighbours, say they saw it coming but that the police lacked the tools to intervene. This is a very serious concern, and it is something that many of our members have talked about and commented on. We are very concerned about this and are glad this debate is happening on Bill C-16.

Blaine Calkins (Ponoka—Didsbury, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to recap how things work around here, and I will ask my colleague to comment on it.

Conservatives are always way out ahead of Liberals when it comes to things dealing with justice and public safety. As a matter of fact, we warned them about the consequences of their changes in Bill C-75, Bill C-5 and a number of other changes they made. We told them crime would go up. We told them our communities would become less safe. They ignored us and did it anyway.

We then propose private members' bills, which the Liberals across the way systematically vote against every single time until public pressure gets so great that they actually then take our ideas, bundle them up in a bill, put them before the House and then claim that we are blocking them. Is that true?

• (1050)

Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent, succinct summary of exactly what has happened in this place over the last 10 years. That is exactly it. The Liberals create a problem, we propose a solution, they turn down our solution, they copy our solution, and then they blame us for it not passing fast enough. That is exactly what is going on in this place.

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have become very familiar with Liberal rhetoric on public safety, unfortunately. We hear their words about combatting crime, standing with victims and protecting women and children, but words are not results, and rhetoric does not keep communities safe, unfortunately. Bill C-16 is a case study in the government's approach to justice: announce the right intentions, borrow Conservative ideas, and then quietly undermine accountability in the fine print.

We will admit that this bill contains provisions that will genuinely help victims, provisions Conservatives have long supported, proposed, and defended in this House. However, it also contains structural changes that would weaken sentencing certainty, expand judicial discretion and erode Parliament's authority, all while violent crime continues to rise.

Make no mistake. Conservatives are ready to get to work, and we will work with the Liberals. They are more than welcome to take our ideas, as they already have, but Canadians deserve honesty, not more Liberal spin. We cannot claim to be tough on crime while systematically weakening consequences for the most serious crimes.

Where C-16 is grounded in reality rather than the same old Liberal ideology, it deserves some recognition. The creation of a Criminal Code offence targeting intimate partner violence is an important first step, because we know violence rarely begins with a single act. It begins with patterns like control, isolation, intimidation,

surveillance and financial pressure, all designed to dominate another person. By recognizing this behaviour as criminal before physical violence occurs, the law can intervene earlier. This approach aligns with Conservative principles of protecting victims, taking threats seriously, and deterring violence before it escalates. If the Liberals are serious about addressing intimate partner violence, Conservatives stand ready to strengthen this provision, along with this bill, not just more Liberal announcements.

Much of what the government is now promoting as progress in Bill C-16 is, in fact, a long-standing Conservative policy. Let me start by saying that making the murder of an intimate partner automatically a first-degree offence was first advanced by the Conservative member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. Expanding protections against the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, like sexually explicit deepfakes, also came from Bill C-216, from the Conservative member for Calgary Nose Hill, which the Liberals expressed opposition to before they finally embraced it. Mandatory reporting of child sexual exploitation material was built on the laws enacted by the previous Conservative government.

We are glad that the Liberals have finally recognized the value of these Conservative proposals. They are welcome to take our ideas, because Canadians are safer every time they do so, but this record also exposes a contradiction that Canadians are noticing. If Conservatives were right about protecting victims, why does the government continue to be wrong on sentencing, bail and accountability?

This is at the heart of the problem with Bill C-16. Buried inside this omnibus bill is a so-called safety valve that would afford judges with significant discretion on sentencing for nearly every serious offence in the Criminal Code. We have seen how this has played out in several instances where the Liberals have enabled judges to give discounted sentences based on the race or immigration status of the accused. Parliament would explicitly authorize courts, because of Bill C-16, to impose sentences below mandatory minimum penalties whenever a judge concludes that applying the minimum would be cruel and unusual for that particular offender. That is not a narrow exception. It applies to nearly every mandatory minimum in the Criminal Code, excluding only murder and treason. In other words, judges could ignore mandatory sentences for crimes like various sexual offences, robbery with a firearm, weapons trafficking, child sexual abuse material offences, robbery and extortion.

Statements by Members

We know that mandatory minimums exist for a reason. They ensure the uniform denunciation of serious crimes. They provide a predictable and baseline consequence for the most dangerous crimes. They provide deterrence and incapacitation of dangerous offenders.

Bill C-16 replaces legislative certainty with subjective offender-specific assessments, thereby fragmenting sentencing across cases, courts and jurisdictions. It is another example that the Liberals are putting criminals first. If a mandatory sentence could be ignored whenever a judge disagrees with Parliament, then Parliament would no longer be setting sentencing policy. Judges would still be left to fill the gap. That is not progress, as Liberals like to describe it; it would mean a quiet erosion of democratic accountability, leaving the criminal justice system unaccountable to the Canadian electorate. The result of this is that Canadians all across the country will live with rising violence, and victims will ultimately pay the price as mandatory minimums are not enforced.

• (1055)

We need to take a step back and look at how we got here. Perhaps the clearest measure of the government's priorities is what it has not done. It is impossible to ignore that it has been nine months since the last election, and still, in those nine months, despite daily headlines, police warnings and community fear, the government has delivered no meaningful bail reform to scrap the weak Liberal bail and no serious action targeting repeat violent offenders, and shown absolutely no urgency in restoring public safety.

Since the Liberal Prime Minister took office, not a single public safety bill has been passed so far, despite multiple attempts by Conservatives to make concrete proposals after months of work to fix the justice system that the Liberals broke in the first place. This has resulted in violent crime being up 55%, sexual assaults up nearly 76% and human trafficking up 84%. These are not just abstract statistics. Behind these numbers are victims, families and neighbourhoods that no longer feel safe all across the country because the Liberals set into motion this catch-and-release system not too long ago.

Police officers, prosecutors and premiers have all said the same thing, that the Liberal bail system, which they are responsible for, is now broken. Repeat violent offenders are being released again and again, sometimes within hours, only to offend again. What is even worse is that, instead of scrapping the weak Liberal bail and fixing the bail system for good, the government first focused its attention on Bill C-9 back in the fall, repealing long-standing and important Criminal Code safeguards that protect religious freedom made in good faith. Without these long-standing safeguards for individuals acting in good faith that is reasonable and without malicious intent, core freedoms are put at risk. The preaching of religious doctrine or the reading of sacred texts could be swept into criminal law if a government of the day deems it objectionable.

At the same time, the proposal introduces a vague and elastic definition of "hate", one that invites abuse and risks criminalizing lawful expression that has always been protected in a free society. Fixing bail should come before policing beliefs, and protecting communities should come before restricting liberty. Conservatives will always defend freedom of religion and expression, especially

when government overreach hides behind these so-called intentions.

Conservatives are not here to obstruct. We are here to stand ready to work with the Liberals to strengthen victim protections and scrap the weak Liberal bail system, which the Liberals set in motion. We are here to restore sentencing certainty, reassert Parliament's role and make communities safer. The Liberals are more than welcome to take our ideas, as they already have, if it delivers real results for Canadians, except we know the Liberals always water down our ideas and then take the credit for it. They are free to take the credit for it if it delivers for Canadians, but rhetoric must finally match reality.

Canadians do not want speeches, Canadians do not want photo ops or press releases, and they certainly do not need another public safety summit so the Liberal government can figure out what is wrong after 10 years. They want safety, they want accountability, they want action and they want a justice system that puts victims and law-abiding Canadians first. Conservatives stand ready to deliver that.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

CANADIAN IDENTITY AND CULTURE

Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is facing an unprecedented threat to our sovereignty from Donald Trump and his administration. This is the most serious external danger for our country in decades, but we also face challenges to Canada's unity from within. Actions and words that sow division, spread hatred and foment violence are scourges that undermine and damage society.

This week we marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day, a sombre commemoration of the genocide that took the lives of six million Jews and damaged the lives of millions more. Today is the national day of action against Islamophobia and remembrance of the Québec City mosque attack that killed and injured 25 Muslims at prayer. Together, these profound memorials remind us of the deadly effects of racism and the need to confront it, and defeat it, every day.

New Democrats will always stand with those fighting for the equality, dignity, safety and respect of all Canadians.

* * *

BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS

Aslam Rana (Hamilton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 19, we had the great joy of celebrating one of my constituents, Mr. Donald Brown, as he turned 100 years young.

Mr. Brown is a treasure and inspiring member of our community. It was a true pleasure to welcome him to the office to talk about the environment and the clean energy topics that he remains deeply passionate about.

I am delighted to stand here in the House of Commons to wish Mr. Brown a happy belated 100th birthday and another year filled with happiness and health. I send my congratulations to Mr. Brown.

* * *

F-35 FIGHTER JETS

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week the U.S. ambassador said, “NORAD would have to be altered” if Canada were to pull back on the F-35 purchase, suggesting that the United States would have to take over operations to address threats if we did not have the correct aircraft to do it.

On Monday, at the national defence committee, we heard from the commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force, who said clearly that the F-35 is the only fighter jet with the advanced capabilities that our air force needs.

This week, the Minister of National Defence said that the file is still “under review”, but we heard testimony last fall that the review was complete and on the Prime Minister's desk. Which is it?

The F-35, a fifth generation stealth fighter jet, won the competition the government ran, easily defeating its lesser competitors. It is the only aircraft capable of carrying out the operations required. Our air force is calling for this aircraft and our allies are calling for this aircraft. What more does the Prime Minister need to see?

When will the Prime Minister commit to purchasing all 88 F-35s that our air force and our allies need?

* * *

IRAN

Hon. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay homage to brave Iranians and to spotlight the bloodshed that occurred in Iran after courageous Iranians took to the streets to demand dignity and freedom.

The scale of the wholesale brutality unleashed on those peaceful protesters by the Iranian regime is unprecedented in the annals of modern history. Many thousands of Iranians were massacred, and many more have been detained.

The pictures emerging from Iran are both horrific and unconscionable. Any regime that brutalizes its own citizens is a grave menace to every member of the international community.

Statements by Members

I stand among members to say that we cannot remain indifferent. We must join other countries in doing everything we can to hold this Iranian regime to account and assist beleaguered Iranians. What I am certain of is that courageous Iranians will ultimately prevail and this criminal regime will fall. It is destined for the dustbin of history.

* * *

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, real change can begin when one person finds the courage to speak when it would often be easier to stay silent.

This summer, I met Oshawa resident Caroline Harlow, a former Canada Border Services Agency officer. Caroline worked through cancer treatments, expecting to return to the specialty position she had earned. Then she became pregnant and was pushed out of the work she loved.

Rather than walking away quietly, Caroline chose to speak. By sharing her experience, she opened the door, and what began as one voice became many, which led to the public safety committee passing my motion to study the systemic discrimination and toxic workplace culture that exists at CBSA. That is the power of one.

I encourage all members to listen carefully to the voices in this study and take its findings seriously.

I thank Caroline, but more importantly, so do the hundreds of officers who deserve a psychologically safe place to work.

* * *

● (1105)

SUPPORT FOR CANADIANS

Ernie Klassen (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians in my riding have never been prouder to be Canadians.

We are more willing than ever to work together to make our country stronger. We care about one another, help one another and look out for one another. These are Canadian values.

That is why earlier this week, the Prime Minister announced the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit. This new benefit will provide meaningful support to more than 12 million Canadians with low and modest incomes.

Statements by Members

As long as we stand up for our country and refuse to weaken ourselves from within through division and quarrels, we remain unbreakable. Unity is not just about kilometres of territory; it is a shared vision for our future.

We stand in solidarity with the world in defence of human rights and sovereignty, and we draw a clear red line when it comes to protecting our country. Let us pull together, work together and collaborate together for the good of Canada.

* * *

SYRIA

Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the situation remains fragile for members of Syria's minority communities. The new government makes promises, but has not yet been able to provide guaranteed security for its citizens. Recent massacres targeting the Druze community around Suweida and the ongoing blockade of Kobani by HTS fighters are especially concerning.

After years of civil war, the Kurdish and Druze communities want to help rebuild Syria. Their efforts are frequently being met with suspicion, distrust and violence. The Government of Syria, and indeed all Syrians, needs to ensure their actions match their words.

Working together, they can build a new Syria, a prosperous, democratic state, with justice and equality for all its citizens, that can once again shine on the world stage.

* * *

MARK ANTHONY GRAHAM

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to remember Private Mark Anthony Graham and to honour the 40,000 Canadians who fought with NATO in Afghanistan.

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks, the United States of America invoked NATO's article 5 for the first time in history, calling America's allies to their collective defence. Canada answered that call. Private Mark Anthony Graham was a Canadian soldier. He was an Olympic athlete, a graduate of Sir Allan MacNab Secondary School in my riding, and a role model to young Canadians.

On September 4, 2006, Private Graham was killed fighting on the front line with NATO during Operation Medusa in Afghanistan. The recent comments by the American President claiming NATO forces were not on the front lines dishonour the memory of Canadians like Private Graham who gave their lives in defence of our American allies. We owe it to our veterans to speak the truth and to honour their service with respect and remembrance.

* * *

COST OF FOOD

Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said Canadians should judge him by the prices at the grocery store. Now, food prices are rising twice as fast since he took office. It will now take \$17,000 to feed a family of four, \$1,000 more than last year.

A record 2.2 million Canadians are being forced to visit food banks in a single month, all because the Liberal industrial carbon tax is driving up costs for farm equipment, fertilizer and food processing. It is worse than the old carbon tax, with no rebate for Canadians. Even Liberals realize that families are struggling to put food on the table when basic grocery costs are rising 5% to 25% year over year.

When will the government finally introduce legislation that will eliminate the industrial carbon tax, eliminate the fuel standard tax, boost competition at grocery chains and cut red tape for farmers?

* * *

[*Translation*]

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on January, 29, 2017, at approximately 7:45 p.m., we lost six Quebeckers in the tragic events that took place at the Quebec City mosque. Six Muslims were murdered for the sole reason that they were Muslims, for the sole reason that they had gone to pray that evening with their fellow believers.

Quebec lost six of its own. Today, our thoughts are with the loved ones, families and friends who lost people they loved. We remember Mamadou Tanou Barry, Ibrahima Barry, Azzeddine Soufiane, Abdelkrim Hassane, Khaled Belkacemi and Aboubaker Thabti.

They are not forgotten, and they remind us that no one, no one, should ever suffer, be threatened, be excluded or be discriminated against because of what they believe or do not believe.

We must work together to ensure that such a tragedy never happens again.

* * *

● (1110)

[*English*]

CANADIAN IDENTITY AND CULTURE

Wade Chang (Burnaby Central, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week in South Korea, I joined parliamentarians and activists from around the world at a conference on 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, where I was proud to share our Canadian experience.

At a time when democracy, inclusion and fundamental freedoms are under attack globally, Canada must lead with clarity and resolve. As the Prime Minister affirmed in Davos, our path forward must be both "principled and pragmatic".

February is Black History Month, and this year marks the 30th anniversary of its recognition in Canada. We honour the resilience, leadership and contribution of Black Canadians, and we recommit ourselves to justice and equal opportunity.

*Statements by Members***COST OF FOOD**

Let me be very clear: racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, discrimination and hate in any form have no place in the House, no home in our communities and no future in Canada. In moments of uncertainty, Canadians do not turn inward. We stand together. We lead with purpose, and we move forward undaunted and determined to defend the Canada we love.

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MAJOR PROJECTS OFFICE

Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year, we worked with the Prime Minister to get things moving again after a decade of Liberal roadblocks. We helped fast-track Bill C-5, giving him incredible powers to approve major projects that would make Canada richer and more secure.

However, no new projects have been approved. If someone goes to the Major Projects Office website, it is pathetic. In Saskatchewan, only the Foran copper mine made the Liberal list and of course, it was halfway through construction before the Liberals even got involved. Way to go, Liberals.

The Liberals expect Canadians to believe that the only way to clear through all the red tape and bureaucracy they built is yet another office with endless meetings, but we all know that all this office will accomplish is wasting taxpayers' money.

Just this week, the Liberals voted against the sovereignty act, which would have gotten Canada working again. Canadians cannot afford any more of the Liberals' delays. Canadian sovereignty depends on getting the Liberal government out of the way.

* * *

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's food sovereignty begins with the people who grow and produce our food. In Kitchener—Conestoga, we see that every day. Agriculture is at the heart of our community and farmers feed families across our country.

Recently, I joined the Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade and the Canadian ambassador to the U.S. for a national round table with Canadian dairy farmers and producers. We discussed the pressures they face and their determination to keep Canada's food system strong. Safeguarding our food sovereignty requires that we be supportive of the producers who feed us and the families facing rising grocery costs.

Our government's new Canada groceries and essentials benefit will provide targeted support to those who need it most, helping families manage the cost of food. We are also working to reduce food costs by strengthening local food infrastructure, addressing production and supply chain challenges, and investing in domestic food production, including greenhouses.

By supporting farmers and ensuring Canadians can afford the food they need, we are safeguarding Canada's food sovereignty for generations to come.

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that a country that cannot feed itself has few options. Statistics Canada data shows food inflation is up 6.2%. Canadians are facing pressure at the grocery store, and now it costs \$17,600 a year to feed a family of four.

In fact, since the Prime Minister took office, food prices are rising at double the rate of the United States. Right now, the Liberal fuel tax adds 7¢ a litre to gas costs, and the Liberals want to raise it to 17¢ a litre. These are not just numbers. These are costs that directly impact the farmers and truckers who produce and bring us our food, and then those costs are passed onto Canadian families. At the same time, the Liberal industrial carbon tax raises the cost of farmers' operations.

The Conservatives are ready to fast-track solutions through Parliament by eliminating the industrial carbon tax and eliminating the Liberal fuel standard tax to bring back affordability for Canadians.

* * *

ISLAMOPHOBIA

Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this National Day of Remembrance of the Québec City Mosque Attack and Action against Islamophobia, six Canadians lost their lives simply for being Muslim and gathering for prayer. We remember them and honour the families who carry this loss.

For Muslim Canadians, this day recalls the shock of seeing a place of worship turned into a site of violence, and it reminds us that Islamophobia is real and has destroyed lives in our country. While we have taken important steps by recognizing Islamophobia through Motion No. 103, developing anti-racism strategies, appointing a special representative on combatting Islamophobia, designating hate organizations as terrorists and more, there is a lot more to do.

Today, I call on all Canadians to stand united against Islamophobia and all forms of hatred. I say, to Muslim Canadians, that I see them, I feel them and I have their backs.

Oral Questions

• (1115)

*[Translation]***FOOD PRICES**

Bernard Généreux (Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, buying groceries in Quebec has become a luxury. Food inflation is 6.2% higher than last year. It is the worst in the G7.

In 2026, feeding a family of four will cost an extra \$1,000. That is mind-boggling. Grocery prices are rising twice as fast in Canada as they are in the United States, and 2.2 million people are visiting food banks every month.

Why is everything more expensive? It is because of Liberal deficits and taxes: The gas tax is set to rise from 7¢ a litre to 17¢ a litre, and that will show in the cost of groceries. Every time a producer, processor or transporter gets taxed, the consumer inevitably ends up footing the bill.

Conservatives are ready to take action. We want to end the taxes, rebalance the budget, break up the monopolies and, above all, support our farmers and give Quebec families a break. These are policies that work and that would lower food prices.

* * *

*[English]***QUEBEC CITY MOSQUE ATTACK**

Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the national day of remembrance of the Quebec City mosque attack. Nine years ago, six people were killed because they were Muslim.

[Translation]

These men were fathers, sons and neighbours.

[English]

We honour their memories. We stand with the families who continue to carry this loss. This day not only reminds us of those we lost. It also reminds us of the ongoing need to confront Islamophobia.

[Translation]

Since this tragedy, more people have fallen victim to hate-motivated crimes.

[English]

While police-reported hate crime incidents have increased, many ethnic and religious communities remain hesitant to report hate, leaving too many crimes unaddressed.

[Translation]

Today, I encourage Canadians to take action.

[English]

Reporting hate to police makes the problem visible. It ensures that support reaches the communities that need it most.

[Translation]

Together, we need to build safer, more inclusive communities for everyone.

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

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a stunning admission of failure, over-promising and underdelivering, Liberals this week announced that they will be seducing Canadians with their own money. Without acknowledging that their failed economic policies have caused structural food insecurity for millions of Canadian families, the Liberals' latest scheme will put \$12 billion more on the country's credit card.

In the spirit of co-operation, here is an idea: Why not eliminate their industrial carbon tax and fuel standard tax, and lower income taxes, boost grocery chain competition and stop taxing farmers so families can keep food in their cart rather than having to put it back on the shelf?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how about having the backs of Canadian families, the middle class and low-income Canadians who need a serious government now to respond to their everyday challenges? That is why we have put in place this particular benefit. That is why we are increasing the GST credit.

Furthermore, if the Conservatives are serious about the challenges of this country, I would hope that, beyond inventing mythology about taxes, they would come to the floor of the House of Commons with serious ideas of the day. That is what Canadians deserve right now.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if things were so great and affordability were in fact improving, there would be no need for the Liberals to spend \$12 billion more outside the budget. The truth is that the Liberals are doing this to distract from their failed policies. They can right now implement solutions to solve the structural problem of grocery affordability and the food insecurity crisis that Canadian families and seniors are dealing with.

Conservatives are willing to fast-track the elimination of all taxes that are having a cascading impact on higher grocery prices. Will the Liberals join us, or will they obstruct real relief for Canadians and carry on with their short-term vote-buying scheme?

Oral Questions

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a classic technique of right-wing populism to identify every problem imaginable and invent some too, and not propose serious solutions. Only a few months ago the Leader of the Opposition was calling for the firing of the Bank of Canada.

On this side of the House, we take seriously what the Bank of Canada says. We are seeing, in this country, inflation within the target rate. We are seeing record foreign direct investment. Beyond Canada, the head of the International Monetary Fund, Kristalina Georgieva, is calling the world to look at Canada as an example for the world of good fiscal policy.

• (1120)

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this just shows how out of touch the government is. Families in my riding of Fundy Royal and throughout Canada are feeling the pinch at the grocery store. Every month under the government, over two million Canadians are now visiting food banks. Food inflation in Canada has doubled just since the Prime Minister took office, making us the worst off in the G7. Conservatives will fast-track policies to reverse the skyrocketing cost of food.

Will the government finally put an end to the Liberals' industrial carbon tax and fuel standard tax, and cut red tape for farmers?

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 think some facts would be good for this debate right now. Here is one for the Conservatives: We are making life more affordable for 12 million Canadians, allowing them to put food on their table.

The party of “no” likes to block; we are building. We are building affordable homes; they are blocking this. We are building safe streets; they are blocking this. We are building a chance for 12 million families to put food on their table with a 25% increase in the GST; they are blocking it.

When will the Conservatives stop blocking and start building?

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, failed Liberal policies got us into this mess, and more failed Liberal policies will not get us out of it. The cost to feed a family of four has increased by \$1,000 just in the last year. Liberal taxes are hiking the cost of fuel at every point in the supply chain. To make food more affordable, we need to get rid of the Liberals' fuel standard tax and the industrial carbon tax.

When will the Liberals put the best interest of struggling families ahead of their own failed policies?

Hon. Evan Solomon (Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister likes to say, “Nostalgia is not a strategy”. I do not know why the Conservatives keep being nostalgic for their past policies.

Here are some new ones: The 25% increase to the GST credit will allow a family of four, which the hon. member referred to, to

have up to \$1,900 to feed that family. That is real money. We have also made the national school food program permanent.

If the party of “no” were serious about helping families, it would support these programs. Stop blocking; start building.

[*Translation*]

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told voters to judge him by the price of groceries. Well, it has been almost a year since he became Prime Minister, and putting food on the table is costing families an extra \$1,000. We have the worst food inflation in the G7.

We Conservatives are appealing to the government to lower taxes. I have an example. The Liberals spent nine years praising the apparent virtues of the Liberal carbon tax, only to abolish it in the end.

Since they have already abolished one tax, why not a few more?

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that, for several years now, we have been implementing programs to help Canadians. We know how well the dental care program is working in the ridings. We have also announced a tax cut for Canadians. Now, we are giving Canadians support to get through this difficult period.

The opposition members keep talking about structural measures. They know full well that we are implementing structural measures, but it takes time. In the meantime, we are showing Canadians that we are there for them.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if these much-touted Liberal structural and policy decisions were working, 2.2 million Canadians would not be relying on food banks every month. On Ormière Boulevard in the Les Saules neighbourhood of Quebec City, the organization Solidarité familles is unfortunately breaking records for the amount of aid it provides. Last year, it delivered just one emergency hamper in December, but this year, it delivered 23. Yes, I said 23 compared to one. That is what food inflation does.

Why does the government refuse to lower taxes to help all Canadian families?

• (1125)

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague that the first measure our new government implemented was a tax cut for the middle class. I wonder whether my colleague remembers that.

Gérard Deltell: That was our idea.

Oral Questions

Hon. Marjorie Michel: Mr. Speaker, if that was their idea, then they should be happy.

The Conservatives always like to quote Food Banks Canada, but they know full well that that organization advised us to provide support to Canadians during this difficult time. I am asking the opposition members to vote in favour of this measure, which will help the most vulnerable Canadians.

* * *

SENIORS

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for days now, we have been warning the government that problems with the new Cúram software are preventing retirees from receiving their old age security benefits. At first, the Liberals told us that we were fearmongering. However, yesterday, they admitted that the problem does exist, but that it is affecting only 30 people or so.

Well, according to journalist Marie-Ève Fournier, there is chaos in Ottawa. She says that over the course of her career, she has rarely been swamped with so many stories from distraught people.

When will the government pull its head out of the sand?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one mistake is one too many, no question. We encourage anyone who believes they are affected to contact Service Canada.

We are talking about a significant and successful modernization of government systems, which will allow seniors to self-register and start receiving their benefits even faster, without having to wait on the phone or in a long line at a government office. If there are any mistakes, we will fix them. Still, this is good news for taxpayers.

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we can confirm that, in addition to the cost, there are indeed mistakes.

Once again, Ottawa is driving people crazy. On the one hand, there are people aged 65 and over who deferred their pensions and have been deprived of cheques for nine months once they finally asked for them. On the other hand, there are people who are receiving too many cheques, returning them and still being sent T4As. Meanwhile, the government is doing nothing, even though its own public servants warned it that the software was full of bugs and has been since June.

When will the government take action?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, there are public servants working on this system to minimize mistakes and correct them. We are confident that this successful modernization of government systems will ultimately enable seniors to self-register, get better service and receive their benefits even faster. This is already happening. If there are any mistakes, they will be fixed.

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, seniors aged 65 and up deserve real answers before this turns into another Phoenix scandal. No one should have to wait nine months to get their pension, but there are cases where that is happening. No one

should have to spend hours on the phone trying to get through to someone who can help fix the federal government's mistakes.

The first step in solving a problem is admitting that there is a problem, instead of downplaying it. The new software is causing tax and financial nightmares for seniors.

When will the Liberals stop hiding their heads in the sand?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are confident that this system and its implementation will ultimately benefit all OAS recipients. They will be able to receive the right amount and receive it on time, as they deserve.

That is the government's job. We replaced an outdated system so that we can better serve Canadians and all seniors in Canada.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians and all members of the House know that communities are facing a food inflation crisis, with 2.2 million Canadians now relying on food banks in a single month. Tiffany Kift from Simcoe Hall in Oshawa is seeing this crisis first-hand. She says people who never needed help before are lining up, including those from dual-income families.

The Conservatives want to work with all parties on serious solutions. Will the government work with us to introduce legislation that eliminates the industrial carbon tax, eliminates the fuel standard tax and boosts competition in the grocery chains to bring food prices down?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member opposite to have a look at the government's announcement this week. The new benefit that we have just announced is going to help 12 million Canadians. It is going to provide up to \$1,890 this year for a family of four. This is a measure that food banks and Food Banks Canada have called for, and it is part of a broader plan that is going to see us actually improve our supply chains, improve competition in the sector and benefit families like the one the member opposite is talking about.

We are a serious government doing serious work, and Canadians know this.

Oral Questions

• (1130)

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a reason free money always sounds too good to be true, which is that it is. The Liberals take and take, and then they gift a tiny portion back and call that good for Canadians. With rebranded one-time payments and additional funding for food banks, the demand will continue to rise as long as the cost of food keeps going up. They cannot rebate their way out of high food prices.

Why does the government refuse to take serious action by working with us to introduce legislation that actually lowers food prices once and for all?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only are we taking actual, concrete steps to make life more affordable for Canadians, but we are also investing in the kinds of supports that help families across the board, from early learning and child care to a national school food program, a Canada child benefit that is tied to inflation, and a dental care program. These are the kinds of programs Canadians depend on but that the Conservatives continually vote against.

The Conservatives should get on board. They should join team Canada. They should be on that side of the House fighting for Canadians in their own constituencies.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to StatsCan, food inflation is now up to 6.2%. Canada has the highest food inflation in the G7. Food prices are rising twice as high in Canada as they are the United States. Driving up the cost of food is the more expensive, less transparent replacement for the consumer carbon tax. They are called the fuel standard tax and the industrial carbon tax, which are increasing costs for farmers, food processors and truckers.

When will the Liberals finally admit that a carbon tax by any name is painful?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the Conservatives' record with respect to affordability. This is the party that supported sending child benefit checks to millionaires. The Conservatives voted against the school food program, day care, child care and dental care. The list goes on and on.

This past Monday we announced the groceries and essentials benefit for 12 million Canadians, helping them with the cost of living. It is time for the Conservatives to stop the obstruction and to work with us to support working families.

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the same government and the same old tired lines. The Liberals have the temerity to get up in the House of Commons and tell the 2.2 million Canadians who are using food banks right now, "Stop complaining; people have never had it so good." Well, Conservatives are not so easily fooled. We know that millions of Canadians are struggling.

When will the Liberals finally take meaningful action and reduce the cost of food by reducing and eliminating the industrial carbon tax and the fuel standard tax?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these are the same old, tired lines. They hand one question from member to member on their side.

Let us look at our track record on affordability. We cut taxes for 22 million Canadians. We cut the consumer carbon tax. We cut the GST for first-time homebuyers. On Monday, we announced the groceries and essentials benefit, which will put up to \$1,900 in a working family's pocket.

On their side of the House, the Conservatives have voted against every affordable measure we put forward. It is time to stop obstructing, and to support Canadians.

Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada has confirmed what Canadians already know: Food inflation is up 6.2%, and it is getting harder and harder for people to fill their shopping carts with groceries. The Liberal fuel standard adds 7¢ to every litre of gas. That is going up to 17¢ by 2030, and this drives up higher prices at the grocery store.

Conservatives would be more than happy to work with the Liberals to repeal this costly policy today. Will they do it?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, time and again in this place, what we see is the Conservatives being the party of "no" while the government is the party of creating opportunities. The clean fuel regulations are an excellent example of that. Advanced Biofuels Canada described them as being "as pro-agriculture as a policy can get". It will add \$1.09 of value per bushel. This creates opportunities for canola farmers right across all the communities that are growing it.

We are supporting farmers and Canadians. They say, "No."

Oral Questions

• (1135)

Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are paying the price for Liberal economic failure one grocery bill at a time. A friend of mine showed me a flyer last week in which the same meat package was twice the price, with one-third less. Canada has the highest food inflation in the G7. Families are paying \$1,000 more this year. Food banks are overwhelmed.

Why do the Liberals refuse to admit that their industrial carbon tax and reckless deficit spending are driving food prices through the roof and pushing families to the brink?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would direct the member opposite to the announcement we made this week. The government has a serious plan to make life more affordable for Canadians.

We are addressing one of the things the member opposite talked about. We are going to be increasing competition in the market. We are going to introduce unit price labelling. This is part of our plan to bring down prices for Canadians and to make their lives more affordable. Part of the plan will see them have almost \$1,900 in their pockets for the groceries and essentials they need.

It is time for the Conservatives to join team Canada, put their money where their mouth is in co-operating with the government and help us get things done.

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, food inflation in Canada is now 6.2%, the highest in the G7. The 2026 food price report shows that it now costs over \$17,000 a year, \$1,000 more, to feed a family of four. Those costs do not appear by accident. Their industrial carbon tax, fuel standard tax and food packaging tax all work to increase the cost to grow, ship and sell food. Conservatives are ready to fast-track proposals to reverse inflation.

Will the Liberals immediately introduce legislation to scrap these taxes, boost grocery competition and cut the red tape for farmers?

Tom Osborne (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every time the government puts in place a policy or program to make life more affordable for Canadians, the Conservative Party votes against it. They voted against early learning and child care. They voted against the dental program. They voted against the school food program, which they do not support. In fact, they called it “garbage”. They voted against reducing taxes for 22 million Canadians. They voted against reducing taxes for first-time homebuyers.

Instead of complaining that things are tough, why do they not join us in making things easier?

* * *

[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for months, the Liberals refused to invite Driver Inc. victims to testify in Ottawa. This week, we finally

managed to meet with mothers who have lost family members to this public menace.

What were these mothers asking for? They were asking the government to do its job. We submitted 10 requests to the government, but so far it has taken up one of them and continues to sit on its backside.

I have a question for the Liberals. When are they going to wake up and stop blaming the provinces?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to everyone affected by tragedies on Canada's roads and highways. Like all members of the House, I sympathize with the victims.

We have taken concrete steps that will significantly impact the Driver Inc. scheme in Canada. These measures are set out in the budget, and we hope that the Bloc Québécois will join us in passing the budget as quickly as possible so that we can move on to solving the problem.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, only one of our 10 requests has been taken up.

Mélanie Séguin and Nathalie Poulin are victims of Driver Inc. who testified before the committee. They have one thing in common: They do not understand the Liberals' inaction. Ms. Séguin said, “You have families. If it were your sister, your daughter, your mother, what would you do?” Ms. Poulin said, “No one wants to hear what we have to say.... No one wants to touch this.... If anyone here today can explain why, I would love to hear it”.

When will the minister respond to these victims?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no one can bring back the victims of such tragedies. That much is certain. We can also be certain that the government has taken and will continue to take action that will continue to be welcomed by the Quebec trucking association, just as our actions have been welcomed by stakeholders in the industry.

The member is unable to tell me which of Quebec's jurisdictions he would like me to interfere in.

- (1140)
[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister broke his promise to “build big, build bold and build now”. His big solution was Bill C-5 to establish the Major Projects Office, yet here we are and not a single major project has been approved, let alone built. This is a clear case of a disconnect between rhetoric and reality.

What exactly is the holdup?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know which major project the member is referring to. If he has a major project that is not currently before the government, I would like him to bring it to me.

What I can tell him is that the MOU signed with his premier envisages nuclear development in the province and carbon capture and storage in the province, and it will interconnect among prairie provinces. Those are all megaprojects and we have not even left the confines of the province of Alberta yet.

We are going to continue working to build this country, whether the MP likes it or not.

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is all talk. This is a prime minister who says one thing and does another. He says that he is all for major projects, yet he has kept on the books anti-development laws, including the “no pipelines” bill, Bill C-69. This week, he voted against a Conservative Canadian sovereignty act, which would reduce barriers and get shovels in the ground. Again, not a single major project has been approved.

How does the Prime Minister square his rhetoric with his record?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Alberta MP may well want to return to Calgary, where his party is having a convention, at which, I understand, Premier Smith may welcome delegates. He might ask her about the contents of that very important MOU, which is going to make Canada an energy superpower in renewable and conventional energy, create jobs for the working men and women of the province of Alberta and create prosperity for all Canadians.

That is what we are going to do.

Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives worked with the government to pass Bill C-5, giving the Prime Minister the ability to fast-track major projects. We did that because Canada cannot grow, export or become more affordable if nothing gets built, but after nearly a year, that fast-track authority has delivered zero results. There were no projects approved, and no pipelines. Barriers remain.

My question is simple: When will the Prime Minister stop talking and start building?

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is trying to suggest that we are not building. I would re-

Oral Questions

mind him that we just saw the largest private sector investment in Canada. LNG Canada shipped its first LNG to Asia. Cedar LNG is now under construction. Woodfibre LNG is now under construction. Ksi Lisims LNG is now approved, and its pipeline is now ready for construction. When Alberta's project is ready, it will be evaluated as well.

Let us stop with the manufactured rage, and let us build Canada strong.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Mike Lake (Leduc—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, less than a year ago, the Liberals were elected on a platform that included an already astounding \$62-billion deficit and lower food prices for Canadians. That deficit grew to \$78 billion in the fall. This week, the Liberals announced \$12 billion in new spending to deal with the ongoing food inflation crisis they created. This is a massive bill that will inevitably be passed on to the next generation.

How have we gone, in just a decade, from a country with a balanced budget and the richest middle class in the world to a country that has to borrow from our kids to subsidize groceries for a quarter of our population?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I said it already today and will repeat it: The target rate of inflation is within what the Bank of Canada gives as a guideline, which is 2.4%.

On the food inflation the member points out, yes, this is admittedly a challenge for the country. The Conservatives are fond of citing reports. The problem is that they never read those reports. Dalhousie University's food price index says that climate change is primarily responsible for food inflation in this country.

In the meantime, what we are doing is introducing the Canada groceries and essentials benefit with, as we heard, almost \$1,900 for a family of four in his constituency, in mine and in all of ours.

* * *

- (1145)

FINANCE

Hon. Mike Lake (Leduc—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not note an answer to the question there.

Earlier this week, CTV's Vassy Kapelos pointed this out to the Liberal House leader: “What you announced yesterday is more than \$11 billion of additional government spending, but nobody from your government has said how you will pay for it.” As he does daily in the House, the House leader completely ignored the question, twice.

Oral Questions

Now that he has had some time to think about it, will the House leader stand up and tell us where the billions of dollars will come from? Why was it not in the Liberal budget less than three months ago? What is the current budget deficit number the Liberal cabinet is now working with?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a fiscally responsible approach is what the government is committed to, and that is exactly what we will fulfill.

I already mentioned the International Monetary Fund. I know that for colleagues across the way, multilateral organizations, not all of them but many of them, unfortunately, are not to be dealt with. These conspiracies continue to circulate on that side of the House. However, the IMF makes very clear that Canada's fiscal position is a very good position.

Canada is an example for the world when it comes to finance. A deficit that is manageable in an absolutely responsible policy is what we are fulfilling.

* * *

TAXATION

Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last spring, Canadians elected us on the promise to make life more affordable. My constituents in Davenport and Canadians across the country know we have taken action to cut income taxes for 22 million Canadians. We have cut the GST for first-time homebuyers, and we are building homes across the nation at a pace not seen in generations. Earlier this week, the Prime Minister announced that our government will help working Canadians and their families with the rising cost of food.

Can the Secretary of State for the Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions please explain how this measure will help Canadians?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, this past Monday we announced the groceries and essentials benefit. There are 12 million Canadians who will get that benefit. It will put up to \$1,900 in the pockets of working families this year, and up to \$1,400 per year for the next four years.

It is time for the Conservatives to stop the obstruction and work with us for Canadian families.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are some comments from citizens about Liberal policies:

“Even earning \$40 an hour, I can't set aside any savings anymore,” said Sébastien. “I earn \$36 an hour, but as a single parent with three teens, I can forget about putting money aside. Every penny goes towards groceries,” said Patricia. “We don't need your handouts. We need money in our pockets,” said Carl.

Some 93% of young Canadians are concerned about the housing crisis. Many no longer even consider the possibility of one day owning a home. Instead of constantly demanding more from our young people, when will the Prime Minister finally stop taxing them and suffocating them with all this Liberal bureaucracy?

Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the measure we announced this week will do just that—put money back in the pockets of Canadians. To be precise, that means \$1,800 for a family of four this year and about \$900 for a single person. That is significant, and it means money in their pockets.

Adding up all the benefits for families, including the Canada child benefit, families will get \$8,000 in their pockets. We are doing things for Canadians, but we need our colleagues to support these measures to help Canadians.

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is quite something. In 2023, Justin Trudeau announced a plan for groceries. In 2026, the problems are the same and the Liberals are recycling the same measures but changing the name. When a plan creates more hardship, more debt, less wealth and less hope, we do not need a rebranding. What we need is a change in direction.

After 10 years of Liberal rule, the results are clear. Young people in Quebec and Canada have less money in their pockets at the end of the month after paying rent and buying groceries.

When will the Liberals finally admit that they have failed and stop going in the wrong direction?

Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians made a choice in April. They elected the Liberals to come up with solutions to the situation we are facing today. This suite of solutions has transformed into tax breaks for the middle class and the affordability measures that were announced this week, as well as the universal implementation of the school food program, for example. We have implemented a number of measures, and that is what Canadians voted for.

We are working for Canadians, but we need the support of our colleagues so that Canadians can see a difference.

* * *

● (1150)

[English]

HOUSING

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every week I hear from young Canadians who have been priced out of their neighbourhoods. In fact, the Missing Middle Initiative reports that half of young Canadians will have to leave the very community they grew up in.

I am not hearing very much from the four youngest Liberal members of Parliament, who were all born in this century and who represent parts of Canada that are being hit the hardest by housing unaffordability: Brampton, Mississauga, greater Vancouver and greater Montreal.

Oral Questions

Canadians have not given up on the dream of home ownership. I have not either. Will any of those four members stand up to help the government get out of the way and to remove the taxes and red tape that are stealing the dreams of Canadians?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will say that members on this side, the young Canadians who represent their ridings here in the House, certainly speak to me about their priorities. They are here taking action to deliver for their fellow young Canadians.

We have the first-time homebuyer tax break coming through, which will deliver up to \$50,000 to young Canadians for their first home purchase.

We are seeing positive trends across the country now, with rents declining over the last 12 months. That is good for young Canadians. We are delivering a groceries and essentials benefit. Young Canadians will benefit from that as well.

This side of the House is delivering for young Canadians.

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Okay, penthouse boomer, maybe you can share one of your homes.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): No. I would ask the member to restart and carry on.

Jacob Mantle: Mr. Speaker, maybe the Minister of Housing can share one of his homes with the Canadians who do not have one.

A study by Canadian fintech KOHO Financial Inc. said that, at the end of the month, gen Z has just 16 bucks left to spend. The Prime Minister told young Canadians that his solution for them was to sacrifice more. There is nothing left to give. KOHO said that gen Z is in survival mode and, therefore, cannot plan for its future.

The Prime Minister claims he wants to work together. We have offered him some solutions. Why will he not take any of them?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, instead of slagging generations, the Conservatives should make generational investments with this side of the House.

We are focused on delivering for young Canadians. The members on the other side of the House delayed, all through the fall and into the winter, the first-time homebuyer tax break. On this side of the House, we have been pushing to do this. The Conservatives also did not vote for the first home savings account.

These are tangible efforts we are making to support young Canadians, and they are being opposed by the Conservatives.

Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a recent study has found that, on average, gen Z Canadians have only between \$9 and \$16 left at the end of the month for spending cash. This is barely enough for survival, let alone long-term saving goals.

Another report from the Missing Middle Initiative found that 93% of young Canadians are concerned about the state of housing

in Canada, with many giving up completely on their dream of home ownership.

Will the Prime Minister stop telling young Canadians that they have to make even more sacrifices and instead end the taxes and bureaucracy that are stopping them from building their savings, starting a family and owning a home?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are helping young people face real challenges at every stage of their lives. When they want to go to school, we are making post-secondary education more affordable. When they are in school, we are helping them gain the skills they need for the jobs of the future. When they are ready to buy a home, we are cutting taxes for first-time homebuyers and building affordable housing fast.

That is what investing in young people looks like. The Conservatives have voted against it every step of the way.

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a new report shows that home ownership among 30- to 34-year-olds has collapsed from 60% to 52%, with the steepest declines affecting younger Canadians. Between 2019 and 2024, for every 100 new adults, there were just 12 housing starts meant for home ownership, less than half the rate of earlier decades. It is no wonder that 87% of Canadians are concerned about housing, and that rises to 93% for gen Z and millennials. Nearly half of young Canadians are considering leaving their city or province because they cannot afford a home.

Instead of lecturing young Canadians to make more sacrifices, will the Liberal Prime Minister finally scrap the red tape and taxes that obstruct them from saving, starting a family and owning a home?

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a millennial and my friends are millennials. What millennials want is for homes to be built. We want this plan to go forward, our plan to build hundreds of thousands of homes, in my riding and in that member's riding.

I just do not know why the member wants to take the hammers and nails out of construction workers' hands and the electrical wires out of the hands of electrical workers, telling them, "Tools down, do not build anything."

The member could stop obstructing and hand those hammers back to those workers so that they could build more homes.

Oral Questions

• (1155)

YOUTH

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have some advice for the Liberal member. Maybe the Liberal government needs to get their hands out of the pockets of Canadians.

A report released last fall shows that gen Z Canadians have virtually no disposable income left, just \$9 to \$16 in spendable cash at the end of the month. Half say they will need to take on more work over the next year, 28% are borrowing from family and 12% are delaying paying their bills just to survive. For young Canadians, having long-term goals and aspirations has been replaced by being in survival mode.

The Prime Minister keeps telling young Canadians they need to make more sacrifices. What exactly does he want gen Z to give up next when there is nothing left to cut? Does he want them to give up their dreams, their futures and any remaining hope that this country still works for them?

Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and to the Secretary of State (International Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we and all young Canadians know that the world is changing. For us to be successful in this changing world, we need to ensure that we are investing in Canadians and building our economy.

For us to do that, we need to diversify our trade. We need to make sure that we are doing more business with other countries so that we are creating good-paying jobs for those young people who contribute to our economy.

We are focused on building a country that will serve all Canadians, especially young Canadians, so that they can live their dream of owning a home and building this country even better.

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a new report shows that gen Z Canadians have just \$9 to \$16 at the end of the month after expenses. Nearly half say they need to take on more work, despite already working full time, while others are borrowing from family or delaying bills just to survive. Home ownership among young Canadians is collapsing, and 93% say they are worried about affording life.

The Liberals often boast that the government has never done so much for young people, but they cannot see it, do not feel it and cannot afford it. In other words, gen Z is literally not buying it.

Will the Liberals admit that their failed policies have deprived young people of the hope for a safe economic future?

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is rich, coming from the Conservative bench, that they are talking about affordability for young people.

On this side of the House, we are building Canada strong. We are creating opportunities for young people. We are giving money back with this new credit. I invite members opposite to work with us so we can diversify our trade, support our skilled trade workers and train more workers in this country. This creates more opportunities for young people.

I invite the member opposite to work with us.

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, youth are in crisis. Conservatives know we need gen Z to stay in Canada for this country to thrive, but 93% are now concerned about their economic future here.

The Liberals say mission accomplished, but disposable income is gone, home ownership is down, and half are taking on extra work just to stay afloat. Conservatives continue to put forward policies that would create good-paying jobs for Canadians and boost our economy, but the Liberals refuse to work with us.

If it is truly time to work together and meet the moment, why will the Liberals not admit they have failed young people and give one of our many policy solutions a try? It cannot get worse than it is right now.

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite that member to speak with folks on the ground in his home province of Manitoba.

We are working with the Government of Manitoba to deliver affordable housing for young Canadians in Manitoba. These are unprecedented investments, through build Canada homes, on federal land. We are working with Canada Lands Company to make sure we are building and that we are giving jobs to young Canadians to build this country strong.

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[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Giovanna Mingarelli (Prescott—Russell—Cumberland, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the global context has put the Canadian economy, businesses and workers under a cloud of uncertainty. Our government has already taken significant steps to help Canadian families and workers improve their financial situation by cutting taxes for 22 million middle-class Canadians and eliminating the GST for first-time home buyers.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance inform the House of Commons of the new measures that will make groceries and other essentials more affordable for Canadians?

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank our colleague for the good work she does and for her excellent question.

The Government of Canada is focused on building a stronger economy to make life more affordable for Canadians. The new grocery and essentials benefit will provide up to \$805 in additional support, on top of the GST rebate, which will go directly into the pockets of Canadian families.

In addition, our government is addressing the root causes of food insecurity by developing a national food security strategy that will improve access to affordable food.

We remain—

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two-thirds of Quebeckers are losing sleep at night because of the Liberals' inflationary taxes. It costs an average of \$17,600 per year to feed a family of four. That is \$1,000 more than at this time last year. This is the worst record in the G7, but the good news is that the Conservatives are ready to co-operate on any initiative that will remedy this situation.

Will this government immediately introduce a bill to eliminate inflationary Liberal taxes, increase competition among grocery chains and reduce the paperwork and regulations imposed on farmers?

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is music to my ears. The Conservatives are willing to co-operate with the government. This is a good day.

We have all just spent a few weeks in our ridings and what we heard is that people need support. We are transforming the Canadian economy, which is being hit hard by U.S. tariffs. What the government is currently proposing is to provide different solutions to support all Canadians during this period of adjustment.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister often says that we should focus on what we can control. Well, I agree. His government controls the industrial carbon tax and the fuel standard regulations that have driven our food inflation to double that of the U.S.

A family of four now pays \$17,600 a year, while two million Canadians line up at food banks, so which is it? Is the government driving up fuel costs to inflate the price of fertilizer and other farm inputs to satisfy its radical targets, or does the Prime Minister not see that taxing the tractor and then taxing the trucker ultimately means less food on Canadians' dinner tables?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said this before, but I will say it again: There has been a study on the impact of the industrial carbon price on food, and it found that the impact was about zero. That is not the issue that we are facing, but when we are talking about the industrial carbon price, and when we are talking about clean fuel regulations, we are creating an economy for the future, which is globally moving to a low-carbon economy.

Let us talk about the clean fuel regulations one more time. In Alberta, the Imperial Oil renewable diesel plant in Strathcona will use

up to 50% of Alberta's canola. Those are opportunities for farmers, which is what the Conservatives should be saying.

Oral Questions

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister often speaks about the levers they can pull. He keeps slamming one called permanent grocery price hikes. His fuel tax fixation adds seven cents today and will rocket to 17¢ a litre, an outright hunger hike hitting every part of our food supply chain.

When will the Liberal government finally show some common sense and pull the lever that pauses this food cost explosion, or is it simply intent on letting more Canadians go hungry to protect its radical ideology?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we sit in the House day after day, and what is so shocking is that the Conservatives focus on imaginary taxes. The industrial carbon price is an important lever the industry is looking to for innovation as we move towards the economy of the future.

We are creating opportunities. We are creating opportunities for the future economy. That is what Canadians wanted. They wanted us to build Canada strong. What we have from the opposite side is obstruction, imaginary taxes and a fantasy land of their own.

* * *

JUSTICE

Chi Nguyen (Spadina—Harbourfront, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, gender-based violence remains a serious concern in communities across Canada, including in my community of Spadina—Harbourfront. Survivors have been clear about the need for a justice system that better understands the realities of coercive control, intimidation, harassment and repeat harms. The protecting victims act, Bill C-16, responds directly to these concerns.

Could the Secretary of State for Combatting Crime explain how Bill C-16, the protecting victims act, advances our efforts to address gender-based violence and better protect survivors within the criminal justice system?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, violence driven by control and fear leaves deep and lasting harm, and too many women and children are living with the consequences. That is why we have introduced one of the largest Criminal Code updates in generations to confront modern threats and to protect victims from domestic violence, keep our children safe, address Jordan court delays and strengthen victims' rights. We are also cracking down on coercive control before violence turns lethal; increasing protections against sexual exploitation, including AI deepfakes; and reinforcing mandatory jail time for child predators.

These reforms will allow our justice system to act faster and deliver stronger protections for Canadians.

Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister and cabinet are responsible for the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, in accordance with the NSICOP act, could the government House leader please provide the date the Prime Minister intends to initiate this long overdue review of the act? I would note that the law states the act and the review were to commence no later than October 6, 2022.

Finally, could the minister please inform the House as to which committee he envisions referring this overdue review to?

• (1205)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for that question and for his very constructive and productive involvement on that very important issue. We thank him for bringing this issue to the House's attention. We will consider the matter and report to the House at the appropriate time.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am raising this issue again because in two months, core federal support for friendship centres will run out.

In Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, I saw how the Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre delivers life-saving mental health, addictions and on-the-land programs. In my riding, the Port Alberni and Wachiay friendship centres are lifelines, providing food, housing, safety, culture and belonging. Indigenous populations are growing, friendship centres are beyond capacity, and budget 2025 offered nothing. This is not reconciliation. This is abandonment.

When will the government commit to renewing this funding with long-term, secure and stable support?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been continuously working with groups from friendship centres, meeting with them to address this very file. I invite my colleague to reach out to my office so we can continue looking at what the future will be for friendship centres.

I know and understand this issue personally. There are two friendship centres in my riding. I am somebody who went to a friendship centre as part of an after-school care program. I think it

is essential that we acknowledge the hard work they do and continue supporting them.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is cutting thousands of public sector jobs, like those of the people who process EI, OAS and CPP claims and passports; agricultural researchers; and 1,300 food inspectors. These are not numbers on a CEO's spreadsheet. They are real people. They work to help Canadians. They support family farmers. They keep our food safe.

Instead of giving his friends a tax break on their yachts and their private jets, will the Prime Minister stop these reckless cuts before public health, public services and our food safety are put at risk?

Hon. Shafqat Ali (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking our public servants for their hard work and dedication. We deeply value the work of all public service employees. They are dedicated and hard-working public servants who play a critical role in delivering key results for Canadians.

As we move forward with a comprehensive expenditure review, we are committed to approaching this process compassionately by minimizing involuntary departures as much as possible.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE OF THE QUEBEC CITY MOSQUE ATTACK AND ACTION AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand that there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action Against Islamophobia.

[English]

I now invite hon. members to rise in honour of the memory of the victims of the attack that happened nine years ago today, on January 29, 2017.

[A moment of silence observed]

Routine Proceedings

● (1210)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as it is Thursday, I would like to ask the government House leader if he can inform the House on the agenda we can expect in this place next week.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to wish my friends in the official opposition well as they make their way to Calgary for their convention, which is of course why the House will not sit tomorrow. The customary courtesy is afforded to the important work of all political parties, and we appreciate the involvement of all those who feel passionate about our country.

This afternoon, we will continue with second reading debate of Bill C-16, the protecting victims act.

Upon our return on Monday of next week, the business to be called will again be Bill C-16, followed by second reading of Bill C-19, the Canada groceries and essentials benefit act, which was introduced yesterday by the Minister of Finance and National Revenue.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to inform the House that Tuesday and Thursday of next week shall be allotted days.

On Wednesday, we will resume second reading of Bill C-10, an act respecting the commissioner for modern treaty implementation.

Finally, next Friday is a day I know everyone is eagerly looking forward to, a day to be spent debating the Standing Orders and procedure pursuant to Standing Order 51.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS[*English*]**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, regarding the membership of committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I move that the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be concurred in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay. It is agreed.

[*Translation*]

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

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]**PETITIONS**

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am presenting a petition today from Canadians across the country who are concerned about the natural health products regulations in Canada.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to ensure that regulations on natural health products and uninsured services be reversed back to the way they were in the past. People from across Canada have signed this petition, and they are calling on the government to reverse the decisions that have been made in previous parliaments.

● (1215)

HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIA

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition I present today is from Canadians across the country who are concerned about human rights protections in India.

The petitioners say Christians in India are being targeted by extremists vandalizing church buildings, attacking church workers and threatening and humiliating Christians across India. They are calling on the Government of Canada to also recognize the crimes against Indian Muslims and Dalit groups as well.

The petitioners are asking for the Government of Canada to ensure that any trade deal that is signed with India ensures that human rights are protected.

JUSTICE

Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from 11,500 Canadians who are asking that the Liberal government no longer proceed with Bill C-9 but enforce existing laws to protect Canadians. Among other things, they say Bill C-9 lowers the legal standard for hatred with a vague definition, which is confusing and unmeasurable, threatening freedom of speech and expression; that it removes important safeguards, such as requiring Attorney General approval for hate speech charges; and finally, that it will undermine constitutional rights to freedoms of religion, conscience, thought, belief, opinion and expression, and the freedom of press and other mediums of communication.

Government Orders

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to bring forward this petition in support of a group of people who want to draw the attention of the House of Commons to some of their concerns surrounding the Bloc and Liberal amendments to Bill C-9. The petitioners are urging us to look at this and understand that it could be used to criminalize passages of the Bible, the Torah, the Quran and other sacred religious texts.

Freedom of expression and freedom of religion are fundamental rights in Canadian society. The petitioners are urging the government to protect freedom of expression and religious freedom in this country, and I stand with the petitioners in their request.

[*Translation*]

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am proud to present a petition on behalf of Canadians concerned over Bill C-9. Canadians believe that the state has no business involving itself in matters related to sacred texts or religious teachings and that freedom of expression and freedom of religion are fundamental rights that must be safeguarded.

[*English*]

GAZA

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present petition e-6751, sponsored by John Mayba from Port Alberni and signed by over 1,500 Canadians who are deeply concerned about the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and Canada's obligations under international law. The petition highlights that under the Geneva Convention and Canada's own Official Development Assistance Accountability Act, Canada is required to uphold international humanitarian law and ensure that aid is delivered in a neutral, impartial and independent manner.

The petitioners call on the House to clearly reject the current model of militarized aid delivery in Palestine and to demand the full restoration of access for UN agencies and established humanitarian organizations, including UNRWA and the World Food Program. They urge Canada to insist on safe and immediate entry for Canadian and international humanitarian and medical workers. They further ask that Canadian funding be withheld from any mechanism that does not respect humanitarian principles and that all Canadian aid to Gaza be delivered exclusively through internationally recognized humanitarian channels. Again, this petition reflects the voices of 1,500 Canadians who want our country to stand firmly for human life, international law and the protection of civilians.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to present this petition from concerned Canadians who are worried about the Bloc and Liberal amendments to Bill C-9. They are urging the government to protect free speech, freedom of expression and freedom of religion.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of many residents of

Saanich—Gulf Islands and beyond Saanich—Gulf Islands. They are concerned that while the Government of Canada has recognized that we are in a climate crisis, and though Canadians continue to support and call for climate action, Canada is continuing to spend, the petitioners note, at least \$4.8 billion a year in subsidies to the fossil fuel industry, including loans and tax credits. They note that the oil and gas industry continues to make record profits, while Canadians continue to struggle with the rising cost of living.

Summarizing the rest of the concerns of the petition, petitioners ask that the Government of Canada end all such subsidies to fossil fuels; invest in clean and renewable energy and infrastructure, including an improved and modernized cross-province electricity grid, while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples through UNDRIP; and impose a windfall tax on excess profits of the oil and gas industry.

* * *

● (1220)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PROTECTING VICTIMS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-16, An Act to amend certain Acts in relation to criminal and correctional matters (child protection, gender-based violence, delays and other measures), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will split my time with the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Government Orders

I am speaking today on Bill C-16, the government's proposal to address the serious issue of rising violent crime and the growing lack of public safety. Residents in communities across Canada and my riding, including those in Penticton, Oliver, Princeton and Castlegar, tell me things do not feel as safe as they used to. I am hearing this constantly. While our region is the most beautiful in Canada and a place I feel proud to call home, many do not feel safe walking our streets, shopping in our downtowns, visiting our hospitals or clinics, or even at night in their homes.

Within just the last few months, we have had a firebombing in Castlegar, an attempted break-and-enter with a shotgun in Osoyoos and a shootout in Princeton. These are things we never used to see before, especially in rural towns. Residents have good reason to be concerned. There is a growing and fundamental issue of violent crime in this country that has gone unaddressed by the Liberals for years, but I am not telling the House anything new. The time for change is long overdue. Bill C-16, I hope, can do some good here, but some concerns remain.

When I first joined municipal politics, people in the community were concerned about many issues, but crime was not top of the list. They worried mostly about parks, about job security and about taxes. In a decade, things have changed drastically. Now, it is a regular occurrence for people to say they are concerned, cautious or even afraid. In a place like Penticton, residents no longer feel safe to take a summer night stroll on our iconic Lakeshore Drive. The business associations there are clear that "crime is what we are hearing about, every single day."

Just this month, I had a conversation with a mother who lost her son in Penticton to violence. This young man was swarmed, assaulted and beaten until he died. Many residents of Penticton will remember this vicious murder, but what they might not realize is that we are mere months away from a statute of limitations issue. Delays in getting this complex case to court could mean this case, like many others in Canada, is never going to be properly heard, and the victim's family and friends and our small town will never have proper closure or see justice. This is not just justice delayed; it is no justice at all. I urge the courts to provide full and fair proceedings to this horrific case.

Sadly, it is not the only one. Why? What has changed in this decade? I suggest it is reflecting a chronic, years-long failure to uphold public safety, the first responsibility of any government. It is reflecting a failure to demonstrate consequences, a failure to provide a swift and fair application of justice for the accused, a failure to provide closure for victims of crime, a failure exasperated by a sluggish court system, and a failure to address a broken bail system.

I appreciate that Bill C-16 tries to find solutions, finally. How does Bill C-16 address this? It is by taking on many of the ideas that the Conservatives have called for, for years. These measures are long overdue in our criminal justice system. After a decade in office, finally, the Liberals have acted.

• (1225)

I give credit to my Conservative colleagues for their work throughout these years to finally get the Liberals to sit up and listen. I am glad to see the Liberals take up the proposal of my Conservative colleague, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—

Nicola, which would make the murder of an intimate partner automatically a first-degree offence. After the horrific murder of Bailey McCourt last summer, this is a proposal that I know the people of my riding and all of Canada can get behind.

I also see that a new Criminal Code offence has been put forth, prohibiting engaging in a pattern of coercive or controlling conduct toward an intimate partner. I spoke about the importance of considering coercive control in the House just yesterday in my speech on Bill C-223, and I welcome it here as well, but the Liberals have also undermined key policies that matter for public safety and for public confidence that justice will be served, like mandatory minimum sentences. This is a policy that the public, historically this Parliament and the Conservatives have been supporting.

In my recent survey to my constituents, almost everyone who responded said they wanted violent criminals held responsible for their actions and wanted them to serve mandatory time. Instead, to appeal to soft-on-crime supporters, mandatory minimums in sentencing are undermined again in Bill C-16. Bill C-16 would amend the principles for sentencing, imposing on judges and courts the requirement to impose a sentence below a mandatory minimum sentence, as adopted by Parliament as law, where applying the minimum would amount to cruel and unusual punishment for the offender. This change would enable a path to lower sentences than mandatory minimums require, even for crimes such as human trafficking, weapons trafficking and offences committed with firearms, such as extortion or drive-by shootings.

Mandatory minimum sentences for violent offenders are not cruel or unusual punishments. A violent crime itself is a cruel and unusual punishment to its victims, their families and the entire community. This cannot be forgotten. Someone who is convicted of a drive-by shooting or armed extortion deserves to be jailed with a clear sentence set by a democratic body of the House representing the desires of all Canadians. In practice, this bill, as drafted, means that mandatory minimums would no longer be mandatory. That is unacceptable to me. Too many residents, families, seniors and small businesses in my riding and throughout Canada have been victimized and do not feel safe. Canadians have had enough.

Government Orders

I do not come to the House to say “no”, but to offer a better way forward. I hope that, across parties, we can recognize the positive measures that I have highlighted and split them into their own legislation that stands apart from these sentencing measures. Doing so would allow us to quickly implement positive changes to the Criminal Code while taking these ill-conceived sentencing proposals for fuller debate and study at the committee level.

After a decade of catch-and-release Liberal bail, repealing mandatory minimums and increasing violent crimes, Canadians want better from their government. They want their taxes and their government to deliver safer communities, to prioritize them and their families over criminals and to prioritize justice. Let us work quickly to meet the expectations that our communities are demanding.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Criminal Code must meet the public's expectations and evolve with the times.

Bill C-16 proposes criminalizing the creation of deepfakes. When someone's face is manipulated to create deepfakes using tools such as AI and then disseminated, it can have a significant impact on the victim's life. Bill C-16 will criminalize that. It also criminalizes threatening to distribute non-consensual intimate images, because not only can distribution have an impact on victims' lives, so can the threat of doing so.

I think these are important changes to the Criminal Code. I would like to hear my colleague's opinion. Does she also think that this is an important change to ensure that the Criminal Code meets the public's expectations and reflects today's reality?

[*English*]

Helena Konanz: Madam Speaker, yes, I do appreciate that criminalizing deepfakes is in the bill and that there will be things we will work on in committee, things we agree on, but why has it taken this long to address crime when our communities have been crying for help for years? This is a move in the right direction, but why did it take a decade to get here?

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague just mentioned that much of what is in the bill was requested a long time ago. I agree with her.

She addressed the issue of mandatory minimum sentences for serious crimes and that is something the Bloc Québécois had asked to be reinstated. From what I understand, to ensure that the bill is consistent with the charter and the many Supreme Court decisions that struck down minimum sentences, a notwithstanding clause was included.

As far as the issue of mandatory minimum sentences for serious crimes is concerned, the Bloc Québécois has proposed this amendment many times. I would like to know what that means to my colleague. Is that not something constructive that should be studied in committee?

[*English*]

Helena Konanz: Madam Speaker, mandatory minimums are extremely important. When a crime is committed, such as the one that was presented to me by a mother whose child, a young person, was beaten in a playground, or extortion or the crimes that have been happening especially of late, they need to have mandatory minimums. That is what we will be pushing for in committee.

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague's speech delved into some positive and constructive criticisms that will help improve this bill.

As it is written, Bill C-16 would allow judges to ignore every mandatory minimum prison sentence other than for murder and treason. Does my colleague feel that this will help reduce the increased crime rates, and violent crime rates specifically, that we have seen in the country?

• (1235)

Helena Konanz: Madam Speaker, without mandatory minimums there is really no way that crime can be specifically addressed in our communities. Right now, municipalities are buckling under the responsibilities and the downloading they have had to take on because of the crime that has hit. It used to be just cities, but now our rural communities are being hit hard. There is no safe place to go, and mandatory minimums need to be brought forward with this bill.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not know if the member is aware, but Bill C-16 would reinstate mandatory minimums, which is something Canadians want to see. However, the Conservatives seem to want to oppose even that aspect of the legislation. They want to factor it out. Not only do they want to change the legislation, but they do not even want to see the legislation pass.

Will the member make a personal commitment that she would like to support Bill C-16, in some capacity, to pass before the end of February?

Helena Konanz: Madam Speaker, the member has been in his seat for many years, and I wonder why it has taken so long to address these very serious issues.

Yes, we will work on this in committee.

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the House to represent the great people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford on beautiful Vancouver Island.

Government Orders

I would like to take a quick moment to pay tribute to Wanda Wetteland, a 31-year navy veteran. She was a much-loved and long-time member of Branch 134 Malahat Legion. Sadly, she passed earlier this month, just the night before her wedding. We will remember her.

Before us today is Bill C-16, the protecting victims act. On January 5, Laura Gover-Basar, a 41-year-old mother from Vancouver Island, was found dead in her home. Her ex-husband has been arrested and charged with her murder. Laura held a Ph.D. and was an instructor at Camosun College, not too far from where I live. She leaves behind two young daughters who will now have neither parent around to raise them.

Allegations suggest that Laura was a victim of intimate partner violence and that her death was the result of this violence. Her ex-husband was supposed to appear in court for failing to follow a court order in a separate matter the very same day that her body was found.

Nearly 200 people gathered in Victoria to bring attention to Laura's death and highlight the long-standing problem of domestic and gender-based violence. They are calling for government action, and I believe that Bill C-16 is a good start to bringing justice for victims. Among the positive steps are changes that would make the murder of an intimate partner automatically a first-degree murder charge. This is a measure first proposed by my Conservative colleague, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, in his private member's bill, Bill C-225, Bailey's law.

Right now, Laura's ex-husband has been charged only with second-degree murder. Under Bill C-16, the law would ensure that her alleged murderer would be charged to the fullest with a first-degree murder charge and also be sentenced to the fullest, as it would come with a mandatory life sentence, life in prison, with no parole eligibility for 25 years.

Laura's tragic case is not an isolated one. As activists pointed out when they gathered in Victoria, this is a decades-long issue that needs to be—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry; I have to interrupt the hon. member.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Do we have quorum?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): That is an excellent question. I will check.

And the count having been taken:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): We did not have quorum, but we do now.

The member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford may continue his intervention.

[*English*]

Jeff Kibble: Madam Speaker, Laura's tragic case is not an isolated one, as activists pointed out when they gathered in Victoria. This is a decades-long issue that needs to be solved.

By making femicide automatically a first-degree murder charge, we would see a vitally important step being taken to bring justice to victims like Laura and their families. It is worth noting that the term "femicide" is a little misleading, as the law would apply to intimate partner violence committed by either gender.

Another positive measure that Bill C-16 would bring forward is the banning of deepfake images of intimate partners. This would keep Canadians, especially women, safe from non-consensual intimate images' being created and shared. This proposal originally came from my colleague, the member for Calgary Nose Hill, and her private member's bill, Bill C-216. From that same bill, provisions that would bring mandatory reporting for child sexual abuse material have also been added to Bill C-16, which would help keep our kids safe from the most despicable of crimes.

Bill C-16 would also introduce an aggravating factor for sextortion. This is a step in the right direction, although in my opinion it does not go far enough. My Conservative colleague, the member for Edmonton Gateway, had proposed a three-year mandatory minimum sentence for all forms of extortion, which I would also have liked to have seen in the bill.

Further, Bill C-16 would affect the National Defence Act, and as a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence, I strongly recommend that we get to study this part of the bill in greater detail. The bill would enable victims to receive information from authorities in the military justice system without being required to make official requests. These changes would allow victims the ability to receive information about their rights and available protection measures, and to receive information from the military justice authorities without being required to make the request. This is a shift from the current on-request framing of the National Defence Act's declaration of victim rights for certain categories of information.

With CFB Esquimalt, the third-largest military base in Canada, neighbouring my riding on Vancouver Island, these changes are especially important to many members of my community. I believe that these measures would work hand in hand with Bill C-11, which we are currently dealing with at committee.

I am glad to see that Bill C-16 is utilizing some great Conservative concepts, and I hope that my colleagues across the aisle will also incorporate our amendments for Bill C-11, without which there would be reduced justice for survivors of military sexual trauma. We need to ensure that our responses are victim-centred and trauma-centred. Any steps that lead us in that direction are good steps.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, some steps are missed in Bill C-16. As it is written, Bill C-16 would allow judges to ignore every mandatory minimum prison sentence in Canada's Criminal Code, other than for murder and treason. Parliament sets mandatory minimums for heinous crimes, as is the prerogative of elected officials, but if the Liberals allow judges to ignore mandatory minimums, there would effectively be nothing mandatory about them.

Aggravated sexual assault with a gun, and human trafficking, would not have mandatory sentences. Multiple violent firearms offences, including extortion with a firearm, weapons trafficking, drive-by shootings with a restricted or prohibited firearm, and many other crimes would not have mandatory minimum sentencing under Bill C-16. This simply does not make sense. Are we seriously talking about extremely violent and heinous crimes without a minimum penalty?

This part of Bill C-16 is a significant step backwards for victims and their families. This is not a victim-centred approach. Since 2015, human trafficking has increased 84%, sexual assault is up almost 76% and violent crime is up almost 55%.

Canadians need Parliament to co-operatively take real steps to make our streets safe again. Simply put, removing mandatory minimums would not do that. As elected officials, we must do everything we can to keep our communities safe. It is our job as parliamentarians to set consequences for serious crimes like these. Bill C-16, as it stands, would undermine that outright authority. Canadians deserve to feel safe in their neighbourhood, and victims and their families deserve to see justice served.

There are many aspects of the bill that I agree with. The aspects that are victim-centric and the aspects that are trauma-informed are steps in the right direction that I support in the spirit of collaboration. My concern with the bill lies where victims stop being the focus. I believe that if we bring the focus back to the victims and do not take away parliamentary authority to set mandatory minimum sentences, C-16 could bring some extremely important and needed changes to our justice system.

• (1240)

I hope that my colleagues across the floor will embrace the spirit of collaboration we always offer and be open to our improvements to strengthen the bill to keep mandatory minimum penalties for heinous crimes. We can all agree that we collectively face significant increased crime. With some improvements to Bill C-16, we could work together to bring forward a positive solution for Canada. The ball is in their court.

• (1245)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe that the member has it wrong. Bill C-16 would reinstate numerous mandatory minimum penalties, something Canadians want to see, yet the Conservatives are opposing it.

We have a series of crime legislation. We can talk about Bill C-29, Bill C-9 and Bill C-14, which were popular pieces of bail reform legislation, or about the legislation we have today. The Conservative Party continues to deny the passage of this type of legislation, and then the Conservatives try to say they are not filibustering.

That is just not true. The reason we do not have bail reform legislation passed in Canada today is the Conservative Party of Canada. That is the truth; they cannot change the facts.

Will the member not agree that it is time that the Conservative Party started listening to Canadians, those in Conservative ridings too, and allow important legislation of this nature to pass through the system? The legislation needs to get to the committee. Will the member commit to having the entire legislative agenda in terms of the crime file pass before the end of February?

Jeff Kibble: Madam Speaker, the member opposite seems to be quite angry, but I must say that the Liberals have had almost 11 years to resolve this. The committee tried 19 times to put it ahead of Bill C-9, and it was refused. That was our positive, collaborative way to try to bring this forward in a timely way.

However, the bill would take away mandatory minimum penalties for aggravated assault with a gun and for human trafficking. It would take them away for multiple violent offences, including extortion with a firearm, weapons trafficking, drive-by shootings with a restricted or prohibited firearm, and many others.

The point of my speech, and my answer for the member opposite, is that we would ensure that those mandatory minimum penalties, which are focused on the victims, are in the legislation.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a part of this bill purports to address court delays, more specifically, the harmful effects of the Jordan decision. This is something the Bloc Québécois has been calling for for quite some time.

My colleague is familiar with that part of the bill. Does he believe that passing this part of the bill as drafted will negate the harmful effects of the Jordan decision?

[*English*]

Jeff Kibble: Madam Speaker, the bill is not about the Jordan decision; although it could have impact, the bill is about mandatory minimum penalties, and certainly it is worth exploring the potential impact of the Jordan decision that the bill could have. That is why I have suggested that we need to look further into it and make improvements, including consideration for the Jordan decision.

Government Orders

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, my colleague raised the case, and I raised it earlier in the debate on Bill C-16 because it is so fresh in our minds: Laura Gover was murdered on January 5. It is a very recent case. We operate under the principle of innocent until proven guilty, but her former partner is under arrest and charged with the murder. It certainly appears to be a case of intimate partner violence, in fact a murder, that took the life of Laura Gover, a much-loved mother and educator.

I want to thank the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for raising this case. I part company with him at that point just to ask whether he has looked at the vast literature and research that show that mandatory minimum penalties do not work. They do not deter crime. They do not deter violent crime. There are many places we need to work, and Bill C-16 would deal with some of them in terms of fighting coercive control and doing more in a preventative fashion.

I just ask my friends across the way, including those on the government benches who brought forward the legislation, to look at the evidence before assuming mandatory minimum penalties work.

• (1250)

Jeff Kibble: Madam Speaker, I know that the terrible murder that we speak of happened in or very close to her riding. There is much research that shows that mandatory minimums do reduce the impacts and effects of, specifically, very violent and heinous crimes. It is worth looking at all sources and information as we look to improve the bill. I certainly believe that mandatory minimums are a key part of the prevention of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): We are out of time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Shefford.

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for St. Albert—Sturgeon River.

Today we are debating Bill C-16, which means we are talking about court delays, sexual violence and protecting victims. I am speaking today on behalf of the Bloc Québécois.

First of all, my party and I would like to extend our deepest condolences to those affected by what is already the fourth femicide in Quebec in 2026. I want to express my sympathy to the family and loved ones of Véronic Champagne, a mother who was killed in Rougemont, in the riding of Shefford.

I was especially moved by the vigil organized by the municipality of Rougemont. Times like these make it clear that it is more than just the loved ones and family members of a victim of femicide who are affected. The entire community is in shock. I have seen that for myself, and I wish Rougemont, a close-knit community, a collective healing. At least this vigil, this moment of gathering, allowed us to begin the mourning process for the entire Rougemont community and the region.

What we want to see with Bill C-16 is a justice system that truly protects victims. This bill seeks to address a crisis of confidence in the criminal justice system. All too often, victims, most of whom

are women, children, and even seniors, experience violence and then are revictimized by the justice system. I get messages about that. That means that our justice system is failing to protect victims and letting them down. This system reproduces the violence that it claims to combat.

I want to give a few statistics and then I will talk about the positive measures included in this bill. I will also point out a few concerns that I have near the end of my speech.

Let us look first at a few statistics. We see that some criminals are never brought to justice because of court delays. As a result of the Jordan decision, serious criminal cases have been dismissed because of unreasonable delays. Here are some actual numbers: Thirteen cases were dismissed in 2021, 18 in 2022, 96 in 2023 and 62 in 2024, and that is just looking at partial data. These cases included sexual assault, domestic violence, crimes against children and criminal harassment. That has a direct impact on victims, who are re-traumatized by this and by the fact that offenders get to enjoy a form of judicial impunity.

That is why action had to be taken. The Bloc Québécois made several requests. Bill C-16 now makes corrections, particularly with regard to the Jordan decision, which the Bloc Québécois strongly supports, clearly. During the previous Parliament, we even introduced a bill that sought to provide a framework for the Jordan decision. My colleague from Rivière-du-Nord, our justice critic, spoke about it and worked on this issue.

Bill C-16 clarifies the criteria for determining the complexity of cases. Certain time limits are excluded from the calculation, judges have the option of ordering remedies other than discontinuing proceedings and there is a new key element, namely that the court will have to consider the impact on victims of public confidence. We welcome these positive steps.

Now, I want to focus our attention on violence against women. I am going to present some more figures that compel us to act. Sexual violence is massively under-reported. Almost 90% of sexual assaults are never reported. In 2024, femicides in Canada took the lives of 81 women killed by an intimate partner, 25 of them in Quebec. A number of cases have already been reported since the start of 2026. I talked about that earlier. I also want to acknowledge the loved ones of Susana Rocha Cruz, Mary Tukulak Iqiquq and Tajan'ah Desir. That is already far too many.

Now I want to address a new critical piece of information. I received a letter from the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability. Fifty-five per cent of senior women killed by a family member were killed by their own sons. This statistic comes from a letter sent to us by the observatory explaining its position on Bill C-16.

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In terms of coercive control, although the bill is making significant progress, there is room for improvement. In fact, I launched a study in committee to look into the possibility of criminalizing coercive control following a request from elected representatives who had worked on the report “Rebâtir la confiance” in the Quebec National Assembly and who told us that they could not take action because the matter fell under the Criminal Code. I then proposed a study on the subject. I have been pushing for this for several months, if not years. We therefore welcome the creation of the offence of coercive control. This recognition is key because violence is not just physical. It can be psychological, financial, social and invisible. Violence, in these forms, often starts much earlier.

• (1255)

I also want to mention an interview I heard following the murder of Véronic Champagne. One of her friends said that femicide was one of the most preventable crimes; she was referring to coercive control. There are often warning signs of what is to come, but unfortunately, as long as it is not included in the Criminal Code, the police do not have the tools they need to act sooner, to act upstream. That is really what the recognition of coercive control is for.

Again, the Elder Justice Coalition report states that coercive violence also affects seniors, dependant individuals, and women living with cognitive disorders. According to this organization, domestic violence against seniors has increased by 49% since 2018 in Canada. Our position is that recognizing coercive control is a real step forward, but we must ensure that no victim is left behind. That needs to be the next step, so we will be monitoring its implementation.

When it comes to sexual violence, deepfakes and cybercrime, it is clear that AI does have an impact. The Bloc Québécois supports the ban on pornographic deepfakes. We also support broadening the definition of intimate images. We also want to see tougher penalties and we would like to point out that, ultimately, young women and teenage girls are the main targets of these new forms of violence. I hope that a study will be conducted. In fact, it is possible that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women will soon be studying the impact of AI on violence against women. A motion to that effect could be presented in the near future. It might be worthwhile in terms of proposing other possible solutions. We know that legislation is an important step, but it is rarely the last one. We will need to continue to monitor its implementation and the consequences of all this.

Bill C-16 addresses another interesting issue, namely young people being recruited into organized crime. We know that organized crime is recruiting more and more young people, at increasingly younger ages, using social media to exploit their vulnerabilities. We in the Bloc Québécois support the creation of a specific offence to target the real perpetrators. It is important to remember that many of these young people are unfortunately being killed after having been recruited, as was the case with Mohamed-Yanis Seghouani, who was 14 years old. That is unacceptable. The message is that young people must be truly protected, not used as cannon fodder, which is what is happening right now. Regarding the recruitment of young people into organized crime, I know that my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord has also advocated for this measure and lamented

the fact that too many young people are still being recruited into organized crime.

Nevertheless, I would like to raise a few concerns. When it comes to victims' rights and restorative justice, we have to be careful about the means used. The Bloc Québécois welcomes, among other things, strengthening the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. Quebec strongly supports restorative justice mechanisms, but has issued a clear warning: Without judges, resources and adequate funding, these rights will remain theoretical.

In closing, we support the bill, but we must still remain vigilant. If Bill C-16 is passed, we will have responsibilities regarding its implementation. We support Bill C-16 because, as we said, it reflects several of the Bloc Québécois's positions. It strengthens victim protection and finally recognizes forms of violence that have long been ignored. However, we will remain vigilant to eliminate any blind spots and ensure that Quebec's jurisdictions are respected. We will be vigilant in committee and elsewhere.

I would like to quickly come back to something. The appointment of judges is a federal responsibility. We need judges for this bill to be implemented properly, but the appointment process is slow. Quebec is responsible for the administration of justice, but the problem is the fiscal imbalance. We therefore need to see how much funding will be transferred to Quebec because, obviously, the administration of justice costs money. The federal government needs to provide funding for that. Finally, the government also needs to improve protection for seniors and vulnerable people.

In closing, we need to keep the following in mind when it comes to this bill, which is so important and contains so many measures: The justice system must not only punish crime; it must also protect the victims of crime. That is what should and will guide us when we study this bill in committee. Then, we will have to see how Bill C-16 will be implemented to determine whether it really meets victims' needs.

• (1300)

Madeleine Chenette (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and to the Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I just want to thank our colleague who has just summarized so well the challenge posed by this terrible situation in our ridings. These are exactly the same realities we are experiencing throughout Quebec, and the concerns she raised are also the same in my own riding.

I also thank her for her collaboration in committee, because we need to work together to advance legislation like Bill C-16. We must prevent and reduce the risks.

In that line of thought, could she reiterate how best to enhance prevention and reduce the risks in order to improve what we should be doing with regard to Bill C-16?

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Andréanne Larouche: Madam Speaker, I noted some of our concerns and some of the progress made, which we will support. However, in terms of prevention, I would like to remind members that Bill C-16 will not fix everything. Criminalizing coercive control is really something that groups on the ground are calling for. I had a conversation with people from the shelter in my riding, Maison Alice Desmarais, who shared some truly devastating stories. As I said, these crimes are often predictable and can be prevented if we give the justice system the tools it needs.

I want to conclude by saying that, when we talk about tools, that includes financial tools. As my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord mentioned, the issue facing the justice system is really the fiscal imbalance. Ottawa passes laws, but Quebec needs money to enforce them.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague is a passionate and hard-working member. Indeed, that is the point of my question.

In the limited time she has, I would like her to summarize the work that the Bloc Québécois has done regarding what is included in Bill C-16 and what it means to be a passionate and hard-working member like her.

Andréanne Larouche: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean. However, this bill was a team effort. Bloc Québécois members prefer to work as a team. I want to reiterate the active involvement of our colleague and fantastic critic from Rivière-du-Nord, who sits on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. He worked very hard on the issue of the Jordan decision, in collaboration with our former colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Denis Trudel. I can mention him by name because he no longer sits in the House.

As I said, for years, the government refused to listen to Quebec's demands to criminalize coercive control. After conducting a study at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women with my Conservative colleagues and holding a press conference that even Liberal MPs attended, the issue I raised became non-partisan. The entire committee held a press conference last November to call for the criminalization of coercive control. Finally, just before we left for the holiday break, the government introduced this bill, incorporating this concept.

I would also like to highlight the work that has been done with regard to young recruits, to ensure that it will no longer be possible to recruit them from the age of 14. This work was led by my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord.

There is something else that I did not talk about much in my speech. My colleague also called for mandatory minimum sentences for serious crimes only.

We helped make all these things happen. It was high time that action was taken on behalf of victims.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do appreciate many of the comments the member has put on the record. When I think of the legislation, Bill C-16, I think about how it is dealing with the issue of deepfakes and also

in regard to elevating femicide to first-degree murder. I think we are in a good position to see the bill go to committee so there can be further discussion.

Can the member provide any further thoughts she may have on the two specific issues I raise?

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche: Madam Speaker, I am running out of time.

First, on the issue of deepfakes, as I mentioned earlier, I hope that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women can conduct a study on this issue. We now know that AI and deepfake images disproportionately affect women. The consequences of that are huge.

Second, with respect to elevating femicide to first-degree murder, I know that some stakeholders called for this in committee. Once Bill C-16 is studied by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, we will see how this aspect will be addressed. Members should stay tuned.

[*English*]

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-16, omnibus legislation brought forward by the government.

There are some measures in the bill that are supportable to the extent that they strengthen Canada's criminal justice system and take into account and strengthen the interests of victims. Many of those measures were literally copied and pasted from private members' bills introduced by Conservative members. If the government wants to take good Conservative ideas, we welcome it doing so. There are also some additional measures in the bill that we wholeheartedly support.

That is where my compliments to the government end, because there are serious concerns and problems with the bill, starting with how the government has responded to the troubling and problematic Supreme Court decision in *Senneville*, which struck down the mandatory minimum sentencing law for the distribution and possession of child pornography.

The facts in *Senneville* are truly appalling and horrific. They involve two sadistic sexual predators who had hundreds of images of small children, made from the sexual brutalization and defilement of these innocent children. The Supreme Court, in its infinite wisdom, applying a so-called reasonable hypothetical, determined that the one-year mandatory minimum for the distribution and possession of child pornography was grossly disproportionate and therefore contravened section 12 of the charter, which prohibits cruel and unusual punishment.

While the Supreme Court thought it was cruel and unusual punishment to impose a measly one-year mandatory jail term for child sexual predators, I think most Canadians find the sexual exploitation, rape, brutalization and defilement of children to be cruel, unusual, evil and sadistic.

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It should be noted that the Senneville decision was far from a unanimous decision of the court. There was a strong dissenting opinion written by Chief Justice Wagner and a five-four split on the court. The dissenting opinion by Chief Justice Wagner laid out, in very clear terms, the constitutionality of the mandatory minimum with respect to the distribution and possession of child pornography specifically. More broadly, in no uncertain terms, it reaffirmed Parliament's constitutional authority to pass laws with respect to sentencing, including fashioning mandatory and maximum jail time.

In the face of a problematic and unjust decision by the Supreme Court, a strong dissenting opinion written by Chief Justice Wagner, and the Supreme Court specifically pronouncing that child sexual crimes are among the most immoral, Conservatives called on the Liberals to do the right thing and invoke the notwithstanding clause to override the decision and reinstate the mandatory minimum with respect to the distribution and possession of child pornography. Not surprisingly, given their soft-on-crime record, the Liberals did not do that.

Failing to invoke the notwithstanding clause, they could have come back with a bill that brings in a modified mandatory minimum sentence by clarifying the definition and the application of the offence, but the Liberals did not do that either. Instead, they endorsed and gave the green light to the Supreme Court's Senneville decision, completely washed their hands clean of responding legislatively and, once again, surrendered the law-making power of this place to the courts.

● (1310)

Even worse, the Liberals have very conveniently and very deliberately used a divided court decision as a pretext to dismantle virtually every other mandatory minimum law in the Criminal Code, save for murder and treason. They have done so with a so-called escape valve that would apply to every mandatory minimum in the Criminal Code except murder and treason.

The escape valve, as it is drafted, is broadly worded. It is not targeted. It does not contain, for example, an exceptional circumstances provision. It does not clarify or provide direction to the courts on how Parliament believes mandatory minimums should be treated. Instead, it invites judges to disregard mandatory minimum laws that, I would add, have not been found to be unconstitutional. Therefore, what this will almost certainly result in is that mandatory minimums and their application at sentencing will be litigated as a matter of course. This bill completely eviscerates mandatory minimum sentences.

The Liberals will say they had no choice as they have these court decisions. They had a choice. No court has said that, writ large, mandatory minimums are unconstitutional. Certainly, the Supreme Court has not said that. Indeed, mandatory minimum penalties have been on the books since the 1890s, when the Criminal Code was passed. Mandatory minimums reflect the constitutional authority of Parliament to make laws with respect to criminal justice, including sentencing, and reflect Parliament's judgment that certain offences are sufficiently serious to warrant a minimum floor, while having regard for long-standing sentencing principles, including denunciation, deterrence and the need to separate certain offenders from society.

Indeed, Justice Cory wrote, as recently as 2010, in the Supreme Court Nasogaluak decision, that mandatory minimums are "a forceful expression of governmental policy in the area of criminal law."

Back in 1990, the same Justice Cory held that a mandatory minimum sentence would only be disproportionate as to violate section 12 on "rare and unique occasions", and that the test would be "stringent and demanding."

It is true that in recent years we have seen that mandatory minimums have been subject to greater constitutional challenge in the face of the Nur decision, for example, of 2015, which constitutes, in my opinion, judicial overreach. I say that because the first time the Supreme Court struck down a mandatory minimum was in the Smith decision in 1987. For nearly 30 years, until 2015, not a single mandatory minimum had been struck down by the Supreme Court. It was not until 2015. Therefore, a government worth its salt, a government that was committed to standing up for victims and putting away violent offenders, would have reasserted Parliament's constitutional authority in this domain, including in egregious instances such as in the Senneville decision and the Bissonnette decision, which struck down the discretion afforded to judges to impose mandatory consecutive parole and eligibility periods to mass murderers, and invoked the notwithstanding clause.

Of course, the current government has not done that. It has refused to do that. Now, through the back door, it has brought in this bill on the pretense of saving mandatory minimums, when in fact what it is doing is completely dismantling them. It demonstrates that the government is blinded by ideology. It is a government that time and time again puts the rights of criminals ahead of public safety and the rights of victims. This bill is a total disgrace in that regard.

● (1315)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I disagree completely with the member opposite. In fact, if he were to give the bill a chance, he would see there is a reinstatement of mandatory minimums. I would highly recommend that he read of those that would be reinstated as a direct result of this legislation.

What upsets me most about the Conservative Party of Canada today is that its members like to talk tough. They like to raise a lot of money on the crime file, but we have a Prime Minister who was just elected nine months ago, along with 70 new Liberal members of Parliament. It is a new government with a very aggressive crime agenda, a series of legislation, and the Conservative Party has done nothing but stand in the way of the legislation passing. Even Canadians in Conservative ridings are getting upset with the ongoing filibustering that the Conservative Party continues to put in on crime bills.

Will the member not at least give us some sort of a commitment to see this crime legislation pass before the end of February?

Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I suppose the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader ignored or did not listen to my resuscitation of pronouncements of the Supreme Court as it pertains to mandatory minimums and their constitutionality.

If the government saw the need to bring forward an escape valve, then it ought to have done it in a careful and tailored fashion. However, it has not done that. The Liberals have drafted the bill in such a way that it would invite judges to effectively disregard mandatory minimums, hence eviscerating them. That is the problem.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Madam Speaker, I first want to acknowledge the passing of Ernie Fage. Ernie was an MLA and cabinet minister who served ably in Nova Scotia. Our condolences go to his family at this time.

I listened intently to the hon. member's speech. He mentioned putting the rights of criminals over the rights of everyday Canadians, and that is a theme I hear over and over in my own riding of Fundy Royal. I would ask my colleague to expand on that.

Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, we have a government that has put the rights of criminals ahead of the rights of victims. The government is now touting bail reform, but it had weakened Canada's bail laws, which has resulted in a massive crime wave. This is a government that, according to the parliamentary secretary, supports mandatory minimums, while the bill it has brought before us eviscerates them. This is a government that, of course, has a track record of not waiting for the courts to strike down mandatory minimums but proactively removing mandatory minimums from the Criminal Code, including those for some very serious offences, including serious firearms offences.

[Translation]

Madeleine Chenette (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and to the Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am a bit shocked by my colleague's comments.

My constituents, like his I am sure, say that online predation, manipulation, cyberstalking, the distribution of intimate images and even the use of AI, including deepfakes, are very real threats and that our laws need to reflect today's realities.

Why are the Conservatives dragging their feet when it is time to support this bill?

I would like to ask my colleague whether he will try to persuade his party to work with us to get this bill passed in February.

• (1320)

[English]

Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I am glad that the government copied and pasted the member for Calgary Nose Hill's Bill C-216 into the bill before us with respect to criminalizing non-consensual sexual deepfakes. That is a positive.

I do not know what the member is talking about when she says that we are being obstructive. There is such a place called the

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House of Commons where we actually debate bills. The last time I checked, we have only had a few hours of debate on this very large bill, an omnibus bill, which has many moving parts. I do not know what the member is talking about.

Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured today to rise as the representative for Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies and speak to the government's Bill C-16, an act to amend certain acts in relation to criminal and correctional matters.

All of us have a solemn responsibility to provide representation and voice to those citizens who depend on us to do their bidding in Parliament. Canadians need us to see the challenges and dangers they face and to do our jobs to make necessary amendments to federal statutes in order to make life safer and more secure for Canadians.

It is no coincidence that we are here in Parliament. The word "Parliament" was derived from an 11th-century Old French word, *parlement*, which means "discussion" or "discourse", and from the French verb *parler*, which means "to talk". We spend a lot of time talking in this place because our forebears resolved to use words rather than swords and cannons to resolve disagreements, to establish consensus for common good and to deliver solutions for the citizens represented by every member of Parliament.

Yes, Parliament can be raucous and adversarial, but we can never let the friction and heat deter us from the duties we owe the people of Canada: our duty to represent our constituents, and our duty to engage in discussion and discourse in this place, not for the sake of merely speaking or engaging in verbal scums but to contribute to progress for the people. Constructive discussion in Parliament can certainly lead to collaboration, and this can include the governing party adopting proposals from opposition members and including those proposals in government bills, as the government has done in Bill C-16.

On September 17, 2025, just last year, I tabled my private member's bill, Bill C-221, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, disclosure of information to victims. Currently, victims of crime can request that they be informed of the eligibility dates and review dates for the temporary absence, release or parole of the offender who victimized them. My bill, Bill C-221, proposes that when the victims are provided with such dates, they are also provided with an explanation of how the dates were determined. When Canadians are victimized by crime, they often carry psychological and emotional burdens for life. My private member's bill proposes common-sense, realistic measures aimed at reducing the stress victims experience in dealing with the parole and release processes of those who have victimized them.

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After six and a half years of Conservative efforts to pass these proposals into law, it is good to see that the government has finally acknowledged the merit and necessity of these proposals and included them in a government bill, Bill C-16. My bill, Bill C-221, follows three previous Conservative bills that carried the same proposal. Those bills were Bill C-466, sponsored by the Hon. Lisa Raitt in the 42nd Parliament, Bill S-219, sponsored by Senator Boisvenu in the 43rd Parliament, and Bill C-320, sponsored by Dr. Colin Carrie in the 44th Parliament.

The legislative proposals of our bills are now included in a government bill, Bill C-16. They were initially developed and advocated for by Ms. Lisa Freeman of Oshawa, Ontario. Ms. Freeman suffered a tragic loss when her father was brutally murdered. Then she endured years of dealing with Correctional Service Canada and the Parole Board while trying to keep track of the offender who murdered her father. Lisa Freeman's experience dealing with these government processes was painful and added to the burden she already carried.

I thank Lisa Freeman for her determination and bravery in persevering through the pain and trauma of losing her father to fight for the measures that increase respect for victims of crime navigating government processes. I am pleased that the Liberal government has finally recognized this as an issue and has chosen to prioritize my private member's bill's proposals by including them in Bill C-16. This means that much-needed changes could happen sooner for Canadians. This is a good thing.

● (1325)

Victims of crime and the people who advocate for them have stated for years that these measures are necessary, and I am glad the Conservative leadership has caused the government to finally adopt these proposals. What is important to me and to victims is that these measures get passed in order to ease the experience victims of crime have in dealing with corrections and parole processes.

Canadians count on parliamentarians to make Parliament work, and until the government passes Bill C-16, I will continue to work to move my private member's bill toward completion, because these changes are worth pursuing through all avenues possible.

Bill C-16 is an omnibus bill, and I think some proposed measures are long overdue but other clauses of the bill require amendments to be strengthened to deliver results and relief for Canadians facing real dangers. Here are some hard facts on the dangers Canadians, including my constituents in Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, are facing: Since 2015, human trafficking has increased 84%, sexual assaults are up almost 76% and violent crime is up almost 55%.

Bill C-16 has incorporated other pieces of Conservative legislation that was drafted. Bill C-16 proposes to ban deepfakes of intimate partners, and this would help keep Canadians, especially women, safe from non-consensual intimate images being created and shared.

Conservatives are glad that in Bill C-16 the government has adopted the proposal of Bill C-216, which was sponsored by the Conservative member for Calgary Nose Hill. Bill C-16 also incorporates Bill C-216 provisions for establishing mandatory reporting

of child sexual abuse material. This would help protect our children from despicable crimes and exploitation.

In Bill C-16, the government has also answered calls from my Conservative colleague, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, whose private member's bill proposed that murder of an intimate partner be automatically treated as first-degree murder. I am glad that the Liberal government has heard the calls of my hon. colleagues and incorporated these proposals in Bill C-16.

These parts of the government's Bill C-16 are long overdue and are relevant to Canadians today. However, other components of Bill C-16 miss the mark because they simply do not go far enough to be relevant to the problems Canadians face today. For instance, Bill C-16 proposes to allow judges to ignore literally every mandatory prison sentence in the Criminal Code, other than murder and treason.

The Liberals are trying to allow judges to ignore mandatory sentences for crimes such as aggravated sexual assault with a gun, human trafficking, multiple violence with firearms, extortion with a firearm, weapons trafficking, drive-by shootings and more.

I call on the government to hear the voices of Canadians who are living with a 55% increase in violent crime and want peace and security restored in their communities. Bill C-16's proposed elimination of mandatory sentence requirements must be split and removed from the bill so that it may be thoroughly debated and allow the solid parts of Bill C-16 to proceed expeditiously for the safety of Canadians.

I call on the government to listen once again to the voices of Canadians who oppose light sentences for serious and violent crimes, and split the bill so we can advance the solid parts and work on the elements that need to be reworked.

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• (1330)

[English]

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

The House resumed from October 24, 2025, consideration of the motion that C-222, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code (death of a child), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Blake Richards (Airdrie—Cochrane, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I acknowledge all the grieving parents across Canada who have had to endure both financial and emotional hardship at the hands of the federal government due in large part to a systemic flaw in government programming for maternity and parental benefits.

Nearly 10 years ago we began a journey together to make change in this country, to make sure that, in the future, parents who experience the loss of a child are not also subjected to that same lack of support and compassion by the federal government. We sought some of the very changes that are now proposed in the bill that is before us. However, Motion No. 110 was unfortunately repeatedly roadblocked by the current government.

Thanks to the hard work of many advocates across the country who pushed back against that heartless resistance, the motion ultimately received the unanimous support of all members of the House at that time, but when the time came for concrete action, the Liberal government deliberately delayed moving on the recommendations that were made by the human resources committee, and it voted down an amendment that we moved to its budget that would have seen positive change for grieving families happen as early as 2019.

Now, here we are debating proposed legislation based on most of the very same recommendations that were made more than six years ago. While I appreciate the member's bringing this forward now, I cannot help but wonder how many families during that time the government could have compassionately responded to in their time of greatest need. Every single case is one too many.

I would like to take us back to the year 2016. I was first made aware of this serious flaw in our employment insurance program when I was approached by two of my constituents, Sarah and Lee Cormier. They contacted me following the unimaginable tragedy of losing their daughter Quinn at just four months old. She passed away suddenly and unexpectedly due to sudden infant death syndrome. While in the midst of navigating the shock and grief of Quinn's loss, they were also informed by Service Canada that their parental benefits would be immediately cut off. To add insult to injury, the benefits they received in the week following Quinn's passing would have to be paid back.

If we were to ask anyone with an ounce of compassion if this should ever happen to a family during their darkest hours, the answer of course would be no. Unfortunately, the Cormier family is but one of thousands of families across this country that have been subjected to the same response from their government, which should be offering assistance for bereaved parents rather than

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adding an unnecessary burden during the most difficult period of their lives.

Over the years, I have crossed the country attending memorial events and rallies organized by broken-hearted parents supporting one another through their grief. They are asking for nothing more than some compassion from their government. Instead they are forced to fundraise, organizing walks, runs and other community events, just so they can help provide a cushion for another family that might someday experience the same kind of loss that they themselves have experienced. They honour the lives of their children by giving back, creating a safety net for anyone who has had to face the same unimaginable tragedy.

The funds these parents had received were already committed to them for the duration of their parental leave, so it stands to reason that in the event of the loss of a child during that time, those benefits could easily continue for a period to help them relieve any financial burdens the family might also be experiencing. Adapting to the loss of a child is difficult enough without having to also be worried about bills or repaying benefits they have to repay to the federal government but would have been entitled to had the unthinkable tragedy not occurred.

That was the foundation for the introduction of Motion No. 110 in 2018. As I mentioned earlier, Motion No. 110 ultimately received the unanimous support of the House of Commons when it was tabled here and was then referred to the human resources committee to be studied. In 2019, that committee tabled a report entitled "Supporting Families After the Loss of a Child". It outlines seven recommendations. The report and those recommendations served as a blueprint to ensure that grieving parents would not have to endure both emotional and financial hardship after an unimaginable loss.

It seemed reasonable that with the unanimous support for the motion itself, these recommendations based on the motion would then see the same support. One of those recommendations was a bereavement leave that would provide income support of 12 to 15 weeks for parents grieving the loss of an infant. This would allow them some space and some time to manage their loss without forcing them back to work out of necessity to provide for their families. However, a federal election later in 2019 and another in 2021 essentially sidelined any future progress that Motion No. 110 could have made in creating a designated bereavement benefit.

• (1335)

During that time, however, the parents, the families and the organizations that I had come to know over the years and that had supported Motion No. 110 did not sit silently by. The government had failed them by refusing to act on the recommendations passed in the report, but these individuals continued the hard work, hoping to finally have their experience acknowledged by their government. Petitions were signed, letters were mailed and emailed, and phone calls were made. Each year the anniversary of their child's passing came and went, but rather than give up and decide to just move on, they remained steadfast in their determination to find a solution to help others like them.

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Finally, after years of watching and waiting for the Liberal government to do something, anything, to implement those recommendations tabled in 2019, a small glimmer of hope came in the 2023 budget. A vague outline for a potential bereavement leave for pregnancy loss was included, but of course there was a catch. This bereavement leave would only be available to federally regulated employees, leaving scores of parents without that same assistance due to their sector of employment. For all the work that these parents had put in to finally have their experience recognized, most of them would be left without access to that leave that they had fought so hard for, and it changed nothing with respect to the flaw in the Employment Insurance Act.

After years of watching the Liberal government's inaction and seeing this announcement only apply to federal sector workers, Sarah Cormier contacted my office once again. She created a petition, which I sponsored, calling on the Government of Canada to implement a bereavement benefit for all grieving parents of pregnancy and infant loss and to implement all seven recommendations contained within the committee report tabled in 2019.

With Sarah's help and the help of organizations and individuals all across Canada, we collected signatures, and I was proud to be able to table those petitions in the House of Commons. Still we had more inaction from the government. More days, weeks, months and years went by. There were more heartbreaking anniversaries that bereaved parents observed. For all the efforts they had made in memory of their beloved child, hoping for change, still the government remained silent.

More parents each year have gone through this same unimaginable experience only to be told by the government that it is sorry for their loss, but they need to pay the money back and return to work immediately. So much time has passed since Motion No. 110 was first introduced in the House. So many parents to whom the Liberal government could have offered much-needed support have lost a pregnancy or infant since then. Why only now? Why not in 2019 when the opportunity first presented itself? Countless individuals like Sarah and Lee Cormier have waited years for change. They have done the hard work to provide support to other grieving parents, wearing their loss with courage in the hope that other families would have one less burden placed on them by their own government during their darkest hours. They have waited too long.

While I am happy to see this injustice may finally be remedied, it also leaves me angered at the thought of so many parents continuing to be subjected to this treatment when recommendations for change were made seven years ago. We have all heard the saying, "Better late than never", but "late" in this case has caused significant emotional and financial hardship for so many parents who did not have to suffer further at the hands of the Liberal government. I sincerely hope that this bill does not see the same resistance to its implementation that Motion No. 110 did, as these parents deserve better from their government during a time of unimaginable loss. It should not have taken this long.

In closing, as the father of a son and an infant daughter myself, I can say that parenthood is one of life's greatest joys. To lose a child is an unthinkable tragedy. Although we cannot legislate away that loss, we do have the ability to assure bereaved parents that government programming will not cause them unnecessary harm and

stress while navigating their loss. The Employment Insurance Act must be amended to accommodate pregnancy and infant loss and to finally give grieving parents the compassion they deserve from their government.

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I get very emotional when talking about some bills, and Bill C-222, the relieving grieving parents of an administrative burden act, or Evan's law, is one of them. As my colleague said earlier, most parents cannot imagine what it is like to lose a child. It must be the worst tragedy a parent can experience. I am thinking of my little Naomie, and I am going to give her a big hug tonight. Our children really are what we hold most dear.

I will begin by saying that this bill puts humanity and dignity before paperwork. That is how I would sum it up, because this bill addresses a rare but truly heartbreaking reality. The loss of a child is a devastating ordeal, and no family should have to face an administrative burden on top of that. The Bloc Québécois firmly believes that, at times such as this, the government should not be adding to people's suffering, but rather alleviating it as much as possible. When a family is grieving, the priority must be time, dignity and stability, not paperwork, forms and financial anxiety. When a family is grieving a child, that is what should guide us, not bureaucracy.

In this speech, I will start by talking about the problems with the federal system that led to this bill. I will then talk about what the bill fixes. Lastly, I will close by launching a broader debate on the Liberals' inaction on EI, particularly in comparison to Quebec and its parental insurance plan.

First, the current problem with the federal EI system is that benefits can be stopped if the child passes away. The maternity or parental leave may be challenged. As a result, some grieving parents are forced to plead their case, reapply or return to work too soon when they should be healing. This situation highlights a disconnect between administrative rules and human realities, as well as the rigid approach typical of the federal EI system. This situation is what prompted the realization that led to this bill.

Second, Bill C-222 corrects this by proposing a simple, targeted and compassionate measure to maintain EI benefits in the event of the death of a child during a benefit period. The goal is to retain maternity or parental leave under the Canada Labour Code. It is important to keep in mind that a new claim is not required and no additional reports are required. There is also a clear exception if there is a criminal conviction. That seems appropriate. It is simple. No new claims are needed and, of course, cases where there are criminal convictions are excluded.

This is a compassionate measure. It is not a financial drain on the federal government, since we know that the infant mortality rate is low and stable. Every year, approximately 380 children under the age of one pass away in Quebec. That is a rate of 4.9 per 1,000 births. We also know that Canada has one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the OECD, so the political conclusion is clear. This measure does not represent a serious financial risk, but it could make a huge difference for families who are affected by this situation. The government cannot use public finances as an excuse not to act. We must also remember that compassion does not cost much and that it is essential in terrible situations such as these.

Third, we support this bill. It simply rectifies an unacceptable situation. I would like to take a moment to put this in a broader context, namely the Liberals' inaction on EI. This winter, I will be sitting on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for the first time. I have been monitoring this file from afar for a long time, working with my former colleagues who served on that committee and who championed the issue of EI. What we ultimately see is that this is part of a pattern of chronic inaction. I have seen this over the years, working in the House, because EI has not been overhauled in decades.

• (1345)

The government refuses, for example, to extend the duration of special EI sickness benefits from 15 to 50 weeks. These are battles that we in the Bloc Québécois have been fighting. Consider the case of Émilie Sansfaçon, which is rather shocking. This mother fought two cancers and was forced to go back to work as soon as her chemotherapy treatments were over. As a result, she did not get the recovery period she deserved. It is rare to recover from cancer in 15 weeks. She was really a victim of the Employment Insurance Act, which has not changed since 1971. I wanted to put that on the record.

We have raised this issue in the House of Commons, and we introduced a bill to increase the number of eligible weeks from 15 to 50 in cases of serious illness. However, even though we managed to get a motion adopted in the House of Commons, the Liberal members did vote against it at the time. It showed a blatant lack of humanity towards these folks. We always get panicked calls at our offices from people asking how they are supposed to heal, because they will not recover in 15 weeks. When will this change? When will people get more weeks for a dignified recovery?

I would like to commend Louise Chabot, the former member of Parliament for Thérèse-De Blainville, for reintroducing a bill in November 2024, Bill C-418. With that bill, she drew on her own experience and attempted to change the number of weeks for cases of serious illness. She extended the duration, and her bill still included the idea of increasing the benefit period from 15 weeks to 50 for cases of serious illness. Unfortunately, the bill died on the Order Paper when former prime minister Justin Trudeau prorogued Parliament.

Still, a number of groups that work on EI issues highlighted and welcomed certain aspects of this bill. It was a major overhaul. I will list a few highlights of the bill, which was introduced by the Bloc Québécois at the time. It established a single hybrid criterion of 420

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hours or 12 weeks of 14 hours. It increased the current benefit rate from 55% to 60%, based on the best 12 weeks of earnings. It increased insurable earnings to 140% of the annualized average weekly earnings. It increased the minimum benefit period to 35 weeks. It increased special sickness benefits from 26 weeks to 50 weeks. It extended the qualifying period for special benefits. Lastly, it amended the provision disqualifying people from receiving EI regular benefits if they had lost their employment because of domestic violence or because of a return to education due to family responsibilities.

It was an important bill. We had another battle to fight because that act, which has not been amended since 1971, also discriminates against women. In 2022, the courts ruled that it was unacceptable for women to be penalized for having children and that working women should be eligible for benefits if they lose their jobs, even if they were on maternity leave. A mother who loses her job during her maternity leave or shortly after returning to work cannot accumulate the number of hours needed to qualify for EI benefits. We had been calling for that reform for quite some time. In the end, the Liberal government decided to challenge the ruling.

To wrap up, the Bloc Québécois's position is clear. We support Bill C-222. However, we must point out that this bill is only necessary because the federal system is broken. Quebec workers in federally regulated sectors must have the same protections as other workers. I would like to remind everyone of something I did not have time to address earlier: With the QPIP, the Quebec parental insurance plan, Quebec made a conscious decision to maintain benefits even in the event of illness or the death of the child. It is a personal, humane and respectful approach to grief.

The Bloc Québécois supports this bill because parents should not have to choose between mourning and staying afloat financially.

• (1350)

[English]

Chi Nguyen (Spadina—Harbourfront, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill C-222, the relieving grieving parents of an administrative burden act. First, I would like to acknowledge and thank the hon. member for Burnaby North—Seymour for bringing this bill forward.

The loss of a child is one of the most devastating experiences a parent can face. It is a loss that reshapes a family forever. In those moments, parents deserve compassion, stability, space to grieve and time. What they do not deserve is confusion, paperwork and bureaucracy.

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As a mother of two young boys, I know how completely children shape our lives. They give us our responsibility, our purpose and our deepest vulnerabilities. Parenthood opens us up to extraordinary love, while also reminding us how fragile life can be. When that loss occurs, the role of government must be clear, to support families and not to burden them. This is something all members can agree on in this chamber.

Each year in Canada, thousands of families experience this unimaginable loss. In 2023 alone, more than 3,200 child deaths were reported, over half involving infants under the age of one, with many occurring in the first month of life. Under our current rules, while EI maternity benefits continue following the loss of a child, recognizing the physical and emotional recovery from childbirth, parental benefits stop immediately when a child dies. The only alternative is to reapply for EI, a process that involves new applications, medical documentation and biweekly reporting that forces parents to repeatedly confirm their loss.

No parent should have to prove their grief to the government. This is the gap that Bill C-222 addresses. The bill would amend the Employment Insurance Act so that parents receiving EI benefits to care for a newborn or an adopted child remain eligible for those benefits even if their child dies during the benefit period. It would also amend the Canada Labour Code to ensure that parents remain entitled to maternity or parental leave without interruption in the event of a child's death.

This is a simple, compassionate fix. It would allow parents to grieve without administrative burden, prevent unnecessary claw-backs and streamline government processes without increasing overall costs. Most importantly, it would treat all families, birth parents, adoptive parents and same-sex parents, with dignity and respect.

I have been encouraged by the broad, cross-party support for this legislation. This is not a partisan issue. This is about shared values of empathy, fairness and respect for families. It is also a reminder that Parliament can come together to fix systems when we see that they are causing harm. I do believe, though, that a broader conversation about how we can modernize employment insurance and caregiving supports is needed. However, Evan's law is about acting now, where we can, to prevent harm that is both clear and avoidable.

Protecting families in moments of vulnerability is one of the most serious responsibilities we hold as legislators. When we see that rules cause harm, even unintentionally, we have a duty to change it. This bill would remove unnecessary bureaucracy. When I think of my own children, I am reminded that the decisions we make in this chamber reach into people's lives at their most fragile moments.

Bill C-222 would ensure that when families face the unthinkable, our systems can respond with care and not further complication. For these reasons, I urge all members to support Bill C-222.

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Madam Speaker, Bill C-222 deals with one of the most devastating experiences a family can face. The death of a child is a moment that reshapes everything for parents and families. It is a moment of shock, grief and

profound loss, and it is not something that follows a schedule or fits neatly into administrative categories.

In moments like those, the role of Parliament should be clear. Our systems should provide stability rather than uncertainty, compassion rather than pressure, and clarity rather than confusion. When families are at their most vulnerable, government should not become another burden they are forced to carry.

Bill C-222 responds to a real and long-standing gap in federal law. Under the current rules, parents who are receiving employment insurance, or maternity or parental benefits, can lose access to those benefits if their child dies during the benefit period. In some cases, they are required to return to work immediately.

In other cases, families are required to navigate a transition to a different benefit altogether with new eligibility criteria, new documentation requirements and new timelines. That can mean completing forms, meeting deadlines and learning unfamiliar rules, all while dealing with the immediate aftermath of a loss. This issue is about not only the loss of support but also timing. These administrative demands arise at precisely the moment when families are least equipped to respond to them. That outcome is not compassionate, reasonable or what Canadians expect from a system that is meant to support families during times of hardship.

The bill before us provides a straightforward and humane response. It would allow parents who are already receiving EI, or maternity or parental benefits, to continue receiving those benefits for the remainder of the approved period, even after their child dies. It would also ensure that maternity or parental leave under the Canada Labour Code is not abruptly terminated in those circumstances.

This legislation would not create new benefits. It would not extend leave beyond existing limits. It would not expand eligibility or introduce new categories of support. It would simply allow families to continue under the framework already in place, without being forced into sudden decisions or administrative hurdles during a period of grief. That is the reasonable and compassionate approach, one that deserves the support of the House.

Conservatives support Bill C-222 at second reading. At this stage, the House is being asked to agree with the principle of the bill, not to resolve every detail. We believe grieving families should not face unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles. We believe the employment insurance system should operate predictably and fairly. We believe committee study provides the appropriate forum to ensure that the legislation is as clear, workable and compassionate as possible.

Private Members' Business

I want to pause briefly to acknowledge the work that has been done on this issue by Conservative colleagues in previous Parliaments.

In particular, the member for Airdrie—Cochrane brought forward work that helped prompt serious examination of how employment insurance and related federal programs respond when families experience the loss of a child, including through committee study and parliamentary debate.

I also want to recognize the contributions of the member for Calgary Shepard, whose voice on this issue has carried a depth and gravity that speaks to real experience, and whose work has constantly stood with families facing devastating loss.

Those efforts helped move this issue forward and contributed meaningfully to bringing it to the point where Parliament is now in a position to act.

Moments like this also remind us of the broader purpose of this place. While we will always have disagreements on policy and priorities, there are issues where our shared humanity must take precedence. When legislation speaks directly to loss, grief and compassion, it calls on all of us to respond with decency and care. Bill C-222 matters because it would remove an added burden at a moment of profound grief. It recognizes that grief does not follow administrative timelines. It recognizes that families should not be forced to make immediate employment decisions or navigate complex paperwork while they are mourning the death of a child.

Employment insurance exists for moments when circumstances beyond a person's control interrupt their ability to work. It is a system Canadians pay into with the understanding that it will provide stability when life takes an unexpected and difficult turn. At its core, the purpose of insurance is continuity. It is meant to create a measure of certainty in uncertain times and to ensure that people are not forced into immediate decisions at the very point when they are least able to make them.

• (1355)

In situations of profound loss, the role of employment insurance is not to introduce new complexity, but to provide predictability and breathing room while people recover and regain their footing. Bill C-222 is ultimately about ensuring that in moments of genuine hardship the employment insurance system functions as it was intended. It would recognize that there are circumstances where the rigid application of existing rules can produce outcomes that do not reflect fairness or common sense, and where modest legislative clarification can prevent unnecessary harm. There are moments when a rigid application of rules can produce outcomes that are technically correct but fundamentally wrong. The death of a child is one of those moments. In these circumstances, systems should bend toward people in crisis, not away from them.

At the same time, supporting this bill would not mean ignoring the fact that another serious gap remains. While Bill C-222 would address what happens when a child dies during a benefit or leave period, it would not address the situation when a parent dies while on maternity or parental leave. Members of our caucus have encountered cases where a family lost a parent and then faced demands from the government to repay benefits that had already been

paid. In these cases, the parent had paid into the employment insurance system. The family relied on the benefits in good faith and the surviving family faced immediate financial hardship because the parent who would have returned to work was no longer there. It is difficult to justify a system that responds to such a tragedy by clawing back support. Loss in those circumstances is already overwhelming. Adding financial shock to emotional devastation does not serve the public interest.

This is not about creating open-ended entitlements or expanding benefits indefinitely. It is about fairness and predictability. When a parent pays into EI, there is a reasonable expectation that the system will operate consistently. When that parent dies while on leave, the family loses both emotional support and future income at the same time. Grief should not trigger a retroactive penalty. For that reason, Conservatives intend to work constructively to strengthen this legislation so that it responds fairly in all tragic circumstances, not just in some.

Supporting a bill and seeking to improve it are not contradictory positions. They are both part of responsible law-making. Bill C-222 would move us in that direction. It addresses a specific and identifiable gap in the law and does so in a way that is limited and focused. It does not attempt to redefine the employment insurance system or expand its scope beyond what is already intended. What it would do is remove an outcome that most Canadians would reasonably view as unfair. It would prevent families from facing sudden loss of support as a result of circumstances entirely beyond their control and would ensure that existing benefits would continue as originally approved. That is an appropriate role for legislation.

When the application of a rule produces a result that clearly conflicts with fairness and common sense, Parliament has an obligation to intervene. Doing so does not require sweeping reform. It requires attention to detail and a willingness to correct what is not working as intended. Conservatives support this bill at second reading, and we will continue to approach it with the same focus, addressing real problems carefully, responsibly and without creating new ones.

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, today we are discussing Bill C-222, which was introduced by the member for Burnaby North—Seymour, a riding in British Columbia that I have not had the opportunity to visit.

I assume that this bill was introduced with good intentions. We will be able to discuss the bill in more detail later. The reason I say that is because the member himself was once the minister of citizens' services in the previous government. In fact, it is the same government, although the Liberals like to say that it is a new government because they changed prime ministers. In any case, it is still a Liberal government.

Private Members' Business

The purpose of the bill is to help people who lose their child. The birth of a child is a momentous occasion, a major life event. I am a father of three, and I can say that becoming a parent is life-changing.

Usually, when a person says they are expecting a new baby, there is a lot of excitement. The individual, the couple and the whole family are happy. However, there are cases where the child passes away shortly after birth, which is incredibly difficult. I was fortunate enough not to have experienced that, but I did lose a child—well, not me personally, because I was not the one who was pregnant—before the baby was born, and I am sure that losing a child after birth must be even more terrible and difficult.

Unfortunately, under the federal EI program, if a person loses a baby, then all of a sudden, they are not a parent anymore because they no longer have a child. They are therefore no longer entitled to receive EI during the leave period that parents would normally be entitled to. Obviously, I think that is terrible and unacceptable, but that is how things currently stand in our legislation. These are archaic laws that have not been modernized in many years.

We can only applaud the initiative of Bill C-222, which shows that there are major gaps and flaws in the employment insurance program. The one we are discussing today is only one of many. That is the worst part.

I could tell you a story. When I was in CEGEP and university, there were campaigns to modernize the employment insurance fund. Since I am 37, that means it was almost 20 years ago. Twenty years ago, there were campaigns to modernize EI. There were campaigns to denounce the fact that the government was dipping into the employment insurance fund, whether it was the Liberals under Paul Martin or the Conservatives under Stephen Harper. In the end, the money was never put back into the EI fund.

The sad thing is that the famous reforms that groups defending the unemployed were calling for at the time were never implemented. This was something the Liberals promised in 2015, when they were elected. They promised the moon. They promised that they would definitely look into employment insurance. They went on tours and held consultations. They have been in power for 10 years. This is even their 11th year in power. There still has been no major change. It is as if all those promises were worthless.

We are in favour of this bill and we will support it. However, it is still disappointing to see that this is not actually a government bill. It is a private member's bill. This is not a government initiative. It is the initiative of a backbencher that may force his government to do something if the Liberals vote in favour of the bill. I am unaware of the Liberals' intentions regarding this bill.

For me, this is a clear demonstration that it is past time for a major, in-depth overhaul of EI. Labour organizations, groups advocating for the unemployed and seasonal workers have been waging these battles pretty much everywhere.

When we talk to people in eastern Quebec, in the north shore region or in Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, they all say the same thing: The EI system is dysfunctional, and it is sapping the life from the regions because of the spring gap problem.

The government might say that there have been pilot projects, but pilot projects are temporary, not permanent. They do not exactly solve everything, and the solutions they do bring are only temporary. There is always the fear that the problem will return or that it is only partially solved.

The Bloc Québécois has fought other battles on the issue of EI, notably with Ms. Émilie Sansfaçon, who, sadly, has since passed away. Her father also fought for this cause. Émilie Sansfaçon would have wanted people suffering from serious illnesses such as cancer to be able to receive EI like anyone else. People with a serious illness are not well enough to go to work and have to devote all their energy to recovery.

● (1405)

Unfortunately, this still leaves only 15 weeks of employment insurance instead of the 50 weeks that should be offered, as proposed by the Bloc Québécois. Still, many steps have been taken, and the government promised to listen and take action. The sad part is that the Liberals are supposed to be a social democratic party that cares about needs of the people, at least in theory. In any case, that is what they claim. They are supposed to have a heart and be open to changing and improving the social fabric, and providing economic support for struggling individuals. I have a hard time understanding why these changes have not come about over the years.

I would like to go back to the time when I was in CEGEP and university, because things have not changed that much since then. I remember that advocacy groups for the unemployed were saying that about one in two people who should qualify for EI were not getting it because of extremely strict rules. I have not seen the latest figures, but knowing that no major restructuring of the EI program has taken place, I get the impression that they are roughly the same today. Meanwhile, we are living through hard economic times, marked by uncertainty and job losses in a range of economic sectors. Under normal circumstances, that should turn our attention to things we can do to make life better for people who lose their jobs.

We are a long way from the 1930s, but let us not forget that all the social programs that exist today for workers who lose their jobs were put in place in response to economic hardships experienced in the past. When we are experiencing economic hardships, it is precisely the right time to think about what we can do for others who are struggling or going through tough times themselves.

Obviously, I think everyone in the House understands that the Bloc Québécois intends to support Bill C-222. However, we think that it should have been more ambitious, especially since this government has been promising reforms for 10 years. It seems to me that, after 10 years, if the government has not taken action, it is because it never intended to do so and probably never will.

The good news is that there is currently a minority government in place, and a lot can happen with a minority government. It is a minority government for now, at any rate. We have also seen in recent years that the Conservatives have developed some virtues, being a little less anti-worker in their policies. It is therefore not impossible that certain pro-worker policies could be adopted in the future with the support of the Conservatives and New Democrats, even without the Liberals. It would be impressive, but it is not impossible. Obviously, my expectations of the Conservatives remain limited. That said, these are possibilities that we will look into, because it is important to do more for our community.

As everyone knows, the loss of a child is a major event in someone's life. The statistics show that it is not that common, however. In Quebec, there are 4.9 infant deaths per 1,000 births. When it does happen though, we obviously want to be able to help these people. In a context where the new Liberal government has shifted to the right over the last term and no longer seems to be focused on the people but on the oil companies instead, we could perhaps argue that this would represent a very low cost to society, since there are only 4.9 infant deaths per 1,000 births and few people are affected. As I said, however, those who do lose a child are deeply affected, and their whole lives change. Everyone can agree on that.

I hope that everyone in the House will vote in favour of the bill before us, but more importantly, that everyone agrees that we need to go even further this time. Quebec has already solved this problem with the Quebec parental insurance plan, or QPIP. Unfortunately, as usual, the federal government is still lagging behind. Now is the time for it to catch up.

• (1410)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The honourable member for Burnaby North—Seymour for his right of reply.

Hon. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I only have five minutes, but I am not going to take a lot of it.

I will start by saying thanks. I want to thank all of my colleagues who contributed, not just today but in the first hour. To all of my colleagues who have been working on this for several years, either at the HUMA committee or in various ways, it is hard for me to explain why it has perhaps taken this long to get to this place. However, I am going to do everything I can to make sure this bill gets across the line.

I especially want to thank the members who presented their own personal, individual stories. The fact that we have members in this House who could have benefited from this bill, who are willing to be vulnerable, get up and tell their stories, tells us how impactful

Private Members' Business

this is for the more than 1,600 families this affects across Canada. I would like to thank them next.

For those families who have had this happen, I thank them for sharing their stories, which are not easy to tell. Those families told their stories not for their own personal benefit but for the benefit of the next family that may benefit from this particular legislation. For that, I say a real heartfelt thank you.

I want to thank the Minister of Jobs and Families, the Minister of Finance and all of their staff who have helped work through various iterations of this bill and who will continue to work as we go through, hopefully, to the committee process and on to what I hope is third reading and royal assent.

Of course, I want to thank the critics, both the old critic and the new critic in the Bloc and the critics in all the parties, for their communication and their work on this so far.

For the 1,600 families that would benefit from it, this bill would provide a simple and elegant fix. A Bloc member rose in the first hour and asked if this was a good measure, saying that it seems to have universal support but that they were concerned about the royal recommendation. They asked me if we had the royal recommendation. I answered honestly that I did not have it and needed everybody's help to try to get it.

I am happy to update the House and say that I believe we have found a path to get a royal recommendation. However, it will require co-operation at committee, and we have to tie up a few loose ends. The required amendments are straightforward. They do not change the purpose of the bill; they simply ensure sound legislative execution. We will work diligently to make sure that is successful. The last thing we want to do is have another bill go all the way through and then not actually help those 1,600 families.

I believe there is broad agreement in the House to move this quickly to HUMA. I do not think it will take long to study it. We could have it back in the House and actually, probably, have the bill wrapped up by February. We have the evidence and the stories. We have the solution right in front of us.

For the benefit of all Canadians and those future families who, in the most unfortunate of circumstances, might face this kind of tragedy, let us get this done. Let us use this moment to help those future families.

• (1415)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

*Private Members' Business**[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. Terry Beech: Madam Speaker, I would like to wish you and everyone a good weekend, and I would like to request a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 4, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

It being 2:17 p.m., pursuant to orders made on Thursday, October 23, 2025, and Wednesday, November 5, 2025, the House stands adjourned until Monday, February 2, at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:17 p.m.)

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