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Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 13, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

BAIL AND SENTENCING REFORM ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the National Defence Act (bail and sentencing), as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

• (1000)

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): There are nine motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-14.

[*Translation*]

Motion No. 1 will not be selected by the Chair as it could have been presented in committee.

[*English*]

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

Motions Nos. 2 to 9 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 2 to 9 to the House.

[*English*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP), seconded by the member for Nunavut, moved:

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-14 be amended by deleting Clause 43.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-14, in Clause 58, be amended by replacing lines 32 and 33 on page 28 with the following:

“Criminal Code, as enacted by sections 8, 9, 11, 37 and 40, apply only with respect to an offence”

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-14 be amended by deleting Clause 70.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-14 be amended by deleting Clause 71.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-14 be amended by deleting Clause 72.

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-14 be amended by deleting Clause 76.

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-14 be amended by deleting Clause 77.

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-14, in Clause 78, be amended by replacing line 26 on page 36 with the following:

“Act, as enacted by sections 60 to 62, 68, 73”

She said: Mr. Speaker, at the moment, all I would like to say in terms of debate is that I am grateful to have the [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] submitted, and I look forward to voting on them, but I will be unable to participate in debate at the moment due to circumstances [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): We seem to have lost the member's last few words.

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac is rising on a point of order.

Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I genuinely do not know the answer to this. What is the practice with regard to an hon. member who is virtual, not visible to us but merely heard? Is it in order for that person to participate in the debate or not?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The ruling is that the person's face must be visible on the camera. The camera was on, and the member was visible. It may not have popped up on the screen, but the member was visible and she did have the proper headset, which is very important for our friends in the interpretation booth.

The member has passed on her time, so we will resume debate with the hon. Secretary of State for Combatting Crime.

• (1005)

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in strong support of Bill C-14 at report stage and to urge members of the House to support the bill as it stands.

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This legislation is not abstract; it is grounded in what Canadians are experiencing in their communities. Over the past several years, we have heard consistent and clear calls for action from across this country. Premiers, mayors, police chiefs, prosecutors and frontline workers have all told Parliament that repeat violent crime is having a real impact on public safety and on confidence in our justice system. They have asked us to act responsibly, not recklessly. They have asked for solutions that are practical, focused and capable of making a difference on the ground.

Bill C-14 is the result of listening to those voices and responding in a serious way. This is a bill about balance, and it recognizes that public safety and fairness are not competing values but complementary ones. Canadians want a justice system that protects their rights, and they also want a system that responds effectively when patterns of violence or serious criminal behaviour emerge.

Bill C-14 would strengthen bail rules and target circumstances involving repeat violent offending, clarify when detention should be more strongly considered, and strengthen sentencing responses for serious crimes that undermine public safety and confidence in the system. It would do all of that while preserving judicial discretion and respect for the charter.

That careful balance is one of the reasons this bill has received support from provincial and municipal partners. These are leaders who are responsible for keeping communities safe. They are the ones responding to calls from residents, supporting police services and working with prosecutors and courts. Their message to us has been consistent: Targeted reform is needed, and it is needed now.

At committee, members from all parties engaged seriously with the bill. Amendments were proposed and debated. Officials were present to provide expertise. Where changes improved the bill, they were adopted. That process strengthened the legislation and ensured that it would work as intended.

The bill before us at report stage reflects that collaboration and that work. At this point in the legislative process, we face an important choice. We can move forward with a bill that has been carefully crafted, studied and improved, or we can reopen and weaken key provisions that are central to its purpose.

The report stage amendments before us would take us in the latter direction. Some of these amendments would remove or dilute provisions designed to address repeat violent offending. Others would roll back sentencing and bail measures that partners across the country told us were necessary to restore confidence in the system. Still others would undo compromises reached after thoughtful discussion at committee.

This is not what Canadians asked for. Canadians asked us to act. They asked us to strengthen public safety in a way that is responsible and durable. They asked us to do the hard work of governing, not to delay or dilute action at the final stage.

Bill C-14 would not overreach. It would not replace judgment with ideology. It would respect the role of judges and the independence of the courts but would also recognize that Parliament has a role to play in setting clear expectations where experience shows that clearer direction is needed.

That is why this bill matters. It would send a clear message that repeat violent behaviour will be taken seriously. It would reinforce that court orders must be respected and strengthen the tools available to address serious criminal conduct while preserving fairness and proportionality. Just as importantly, it would demonstrate that governments can work collaboratively across jurisdictions and party lines to address complex issues. It reflects input from provinces and territories, from law enforcement and from experts. It shows what can be achieved when we focus on outcomes rather than slogans.

● (1010)

Weakening this bill at report stage would undermine that work. It would create uncertainty at a moment when clarity is needed. It would send the wrong signal to communities that have been asking for leadership and follow-through.

Public safety is not a partisan issue; it is a shared responsibility. Bill C-14 reflects that understanding and is thoughtful, measured and responsive to the realities Canadians are facing. The House has done important work on this bill. Now is the time to see it through.

I urge all members to support Bill C-14 at report stage and allow this legislation to move forward so that these reforms can make a real difference in communities across the country.

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, firstly, I agree that public safety is not a partisan issue, and it was noticeable that this point was highlighted in my hon. friend's speech.

I want to point my friend to the issue of mandatory minimums for the most heinous crimes. We know that when those are eroded, the public feels that judges are taking the law into their own hands and are not punishing strictly for the most heinous crimes. What message does that send to society?

Also, the fact that so many of these mandatory minimums have been upheld means the public may see this as eroding things that are necessary, which the court has already ruled on. I would like my friend to elaborate on that.

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Hon. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-14 would not erode any mandatory minimums. This is an issue that has been litigated. In our democracy, we have independent institutions such as our judiciary, the Supreme Court, which has forced this Parliament to act. In a previous Parliament we had acted, but that does not mean that mandatory minimums do not still exist within the Criminal Code for specific crimes. We have mandatory minimums in many instances, but this bill does not touch that area.

I am wondering why the member is implying something, because I believe it is a bit misleading and could cause people to think that we have somehow eroded those minimums in this bill.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am pleased to see that Bill C-14 is before the House. In fact, I argued back in December that there was no reason Bill C-14 should not pass the House of Commons and the Senate before the end of the year.

In the last election, the Prime Minister and ministers came with an election platform based on crime and looking at ways we could bring in legislation. The Conservative member just made reference to mandatory minimums. Bill C-16 reinstates mandatory minimums.

I am wondering if the member could provide her thoughts on the package of crime legislation we have brought forward based on the election platform. We have seen a lot of frustration due to filibustering from the Conservative Party. It is time that we passed not only Bill C-14 but also the other aspects of legislation.

Hon. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a very good point. Bill C-16 is legislation that is currently in the committee process, and it does reinstate mandatory minimums in cases of sexual assault. It is very important that when we talk about protecting our children, we make sure that our systems are in place in order to do so. That is just one thing that is addressed in Bill C-16.

In this bill, it is so important to recognize that it addresses organized auto theft, break and enter of homes, human trafficking and smuggling, assault, sexual assault, violent extortion and many other things, including retail crime and repeat violent offenders. It is very important that we address these issues and get this bill passed from the House.

• (1015)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, another piece of legislation is Bill C-2, on lawful access. We hear a lot about the importance of fighting extortion. When I think of Bill C-2, this is a very powerful bill that would enable us to bring in lawful access, which would give more tools to our law enforcement agencies.

I wonder if the minister would provide her thoughts on why it is so critically important that we not forget about Bill C-2 and that we also see that legislation pass.

Hon. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly important and that is why we brought that bill back in June. It has been very disappointing to see that there has not been any co-operation from the opposition parties. We would have expected some from the Conservatives, in particular, who claim to be the party of law and order, yet they are not allowing police the tools they need to tackle mod-

ern-day crime. This is so important in the cases of child exploitation, sextortion and extortion that are happening in so many communities across Canada.

Jonathan Rowe (Terra Nova—The Peninsulas, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year when I was nominated to be a Conservative candidate, I had an interesting conversation with Ches Crosbie. Mr. Crosbie asked me a tough question. He asked me, out of the four Conservative platform pillars, which one I thought would be the most important to my constituents. I took a moment and I thought real long and hard. Axe the tax, stop the crime, build the homes and fix the budget are all very important issues, but in my rural riding, where people have to travel long distances for work, drive large SUVs to handle our terrible roads and use pickup trucks to do their daily tasks, I figured axing the tax would be one of the biggest concerns in rural Newfoundland. Boy, was I wrong.

It did not take long for me to realize that stopping crime was one of the biggest issues facing rural Newfoundland and Labrador. While rural Newfoundland is not riddled with extortion like we see in many parts of Canada, families, people and business owners are living in fear. Over the summer, communities in Conception Bay North were devastated by forest fires that swept through their communities. Families, seniors and people all along that shore had to leave their homes to find a place to stay. Unfortunately, many of them lost their homes and have yet to return.

However, that was not the first fire they experienced. That was the 13th fire in less than three months. Multiple people in that community reported the fire previously as potential arson. Unfortunately, nothing was done. Even during the fires, I was told that people were sneaking in to the evacuated zones and breaking into homes. Imagine that: thieves brazen enough to steal from the people who are suffering the most.

Now, even while the community tries to rebuild, crime is rampant. I am being told that truckloads of two-by-fours are being stolen. Tools are being stolen. This is on a regular basis. They are not one-time events, but happening repeatedly. People from the area are calling and begging me, and actually begging all of us, all of us parliamentarians, to work together to solve this problem. Not only do they ask for increased policing, but they also ask for increased bail reform. Even everyday Canadians know that all these crimes are being committed over and over by the same people, and that the heart of the problem is in the justice system. They are desperate for change. They have even taken it upon themselves to circulate petitions to call for change, a petition that I will be glad to present here in the House of Commons at a later date.

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On the opposite end of my riding, they are having the same issue. The Town of Carmanville invited me to a regional event where people from neighbouring communities voiced their significant concerns about crime in the area. Parents in the meeting told me they were worried about letting their kids walk down the road to their friends' house nearby because of the increased number of intoxicated drivers due to the excessive amount of drugs in the area.

What makes the situation worse is that the town of Carmanville and the area feel completely abandoned. Their police station is empty. They have one police station and three RCMP homes that are maintained and heated but are completely empty. Quite frankly, they are abandoned. During the lost Liberal decade, their police station has become completely eroded of personnel, but why? Why is it so hard for the government to secure police officers?

When I chat with officers, a common theme comes up: Crime is up, but morale is down. Police are so frustrated with the justice system and their constant game of cat and mouse that they retire as soon as they can, eager to leave the force and oftentimes even having to go on sick leave due to the mental health strain this crime cycle creates. Imagine them getting up every day, putting on a uniform and holstering a gun, not knowing if they will return to see their families that evening and risking their lives just for the criminals they catch to get a slap on the wrist and a get-out-of-jail-free card.

This massive increase in crime has even changed the fabric of our Newfoundland culture. Homeowners in the safest communities are locking their doors, not just at nighttime but even during the day while they are in their own homes. This was not unheard of 10 years ago, but in some communities, it may have even been considered rude and unfriendly to do so.

• (1020)

Parents are more and more fearful of letting their children play in nearby parks and playgrounds. Cultural activities like mummering and even trick-or-treating are rapidly eroding as the risks become higher and higher. Cabin owners leave their properties not knowing what they will come back to, with break and enter becoming the norm. This is all due to 10 years of Liberal failed policies.

When I saw and heard of crime rates going up and heard of these violent crimes, I always thought it was a sign of the times, that it was the way the world is. I figured that our culture must be producing more criminals. Once I got to Ottawa, I learned what was really behind this change. It did not happen because of a whim or because of changes on TV. It happened because the Liberal government introduced the principle of restraint.

This principle instructed judges, who preside over thousands of bail applications, to release accused criminals at the earliest opportunity and with the least restrictive restrictions. Conservatives feel that this is the core of the problem. Unfortunately, Liberals have decided to keep this language pertaining to the principle of restraint in the bill, keeping their soft-on-crime, hug-a-thug mentality.

Additionally, the bill fails to get tough enough on conditional sentencing orders. Criminals who are involved in robbery, gun and trafficking offences are still able to access house arrest. Over and over again, at doors and meetings across my riding, I hear that peo-

ple are sick and tired of these criminals getting arrested and getting nothing but a soft slap on the wrist. There is even a joke. People say that the criminals get home before the police are off duty. Crime should not be a joking matter. We need to get serious about it.

Firstly, we need to get rid of this idea that criminals should get the least amount of punishment allocated by the law. If judges, courts and prosecutors feel that these criminals deserve more time, they should get more time. Conservatives want to repeal the principle of restraint and replace it with the principle of prioritizing community and public safety, as set out in our private member's bill, the jail not bail act.

Conservatives want to restore mandatory minimums for kidnapping, human trafficking, extortion, arson and other serious violent crimes. When we speed, we know the consequences. There is a fine we must pay. It is a minimum, not an amount that we can negotiate. Why should human trafficking, one of the most horrendous crimes imaginable, not have the same idea instead of minimum consequences?

Let us talk about bail reform. "Jail not bail" is something that Conservatives have chanted alone for years. It was not until election time that the Liberals were pressured by the public to do something and said they would consider bail reform. Unfortunately, the bill misses key aspects at the core of the problem.

Conservatives know that judges and courts need to consider the full criminal history and outstanding charges of criminals. Many Canadians, including myself, are shocked that this is not already mandated. Conservatives want to do exactly that. If we were in government, we would mandate courts to consider the full criminal history of the accused. It is just common sense.

Here is the most unbelievable part. Right now, sometimes, when someone is out on bail, they may need surety, someone who supervises them, someone to vouch for them, who will ensure that they will be back for court and that they will behave while on bail, yet, right now, the guarantor, the supervisor, could have been convicted in the past. Conservatives want to make sure that these criminals out on bail are not being supervised by other criminals.

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Conservatives want to require courts to enforce guarantor obligations and ensure that they do not have an indictable conviction. Additionally, Conservatives want to give the courts the power to make non-residents surrender their passports in situations they feel are appropriate, reducing the chances of the accused skipping bail and continuing criminal activity in other countries.

Canadians are asking us to work together. Although we do not believe that the bill does enough, we are proud of the inputs and additions that Conservatives made to the bill during the process. We will continue to advocate for stricter penalties, for more policing and for a justice system that protects the community, not criminals.

• (1025)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last federal election, under a year ago, Canada's new Prime Minister made a commitment, an election platform, to deal with crime. Before the House of Commons, over the last number of months, we have seen a series of bills that deal with making our communities safer. Bill C-14, which we are debating today, should have passed at the end of 2025. It did not pass because of the filibustering of the Conservative Party of Canada. There is a series of legislative bills that need to be passed, yet the Conservative Party is more motivated to raise money in its own self-interest than to pass this suite of laws.

My question to the member is this: Will he not take it as notice that Canadians want the legislative suite of bills to be passed, not just Bill C-14—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Terra Nova—The Peninsulas.

Jonathan Rowe: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government for 10 years has been soft on crime. It was not until the public put the government on notice that it decided to pretend to do something about it and came out with this bill. The member across the way said it wanted to have it done by Christmas, yet it put the controversial bill, Bill C-9, in front of it to try to take away the religious rights of people across this country. It is obstructing getting this through, so I am frustrated. This needs to keep going.

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker. I thank my hon. friend for his passionate speech. My heart goes out to the members in his community who faced violent criminals while going through a catastrophe. It is endemic. It is an example of how our criminal justice system has failed us. When we look at Bill C-5 and Bill C-75, we see a culture of releasing violent offenders. It is no wonder 60% of Canadians feel that crime is rising in their community and that they are not safe.

How does my friend think this bill is going to solve that problem, if at all, and restore the confidence of the public?

Jonathan Rowe: Mr. Speaker, repeat offending is something that happens over and over. When we go into communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, oftentimes if we ask who the troublemaker is, everyone points their finger at the same house. The police know who it is, the community knows who it is, but unfortunately, the justice system is not prepared to handle the situation.

There are some small things in here that go in the right direction and would fix some of that stuff, but they are not as big as what the Conservatives want. However, we are definitely working with the Liberals to try to make that happen.

[*Translation*]

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague on how we got to the clause-by-clause consideration of this bill.

As a result of a mutual agreement between the Liberals and the Conservatives, only two sittings were held where we could hear from witnesses, followed by one sitting for a clause-by-clause study. Due to the Conservatives' filibuster, in part, of Bill C-9, it was a way forward to get to Bill C-14.

Does the Conservative member think that having only two sittings to hear from witnesses is enough for such a substantial bill?

[*English*]

Jonathan Rowe: Mr. Speaker, I can see the frustration in having more stuff to propose. The Conservatives wanted to make sure we got this passed very quickly. We felt it was a step in the right direction, and that Canadians wanted it and wanted it rapidly.

• (1030)

Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for that impassioned speech, and I appreciated his bringing light to the issue through a wonderful Christmas float this year, putting the Grinch in jail properly.

I want to highlight what he said, because I have seen it in my rural communities too. The social fabric of our community is changing because people are petrified. We are seeing violent carjackers. We are seeing rural crime rising.

Could you talk a bit more about the impact on rural communities, in particular?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Again, we will ask the questions through the Chair.

The hon. member for Terra Nova—The Peninsulas.

Jonathan Rowe: Mr. Speaker, rural Canada and rural Newfoundland were the safest places in the world, places where nobody locked their doors and everybody trusted each other. There was a fabric there. I talked about that a bit in my speech. That is lost. It is heartbreaking that people growing up in small communities now have to live in fear, not just for themselves but for their children and their families. It is very sad.

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[*Translation*]

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks by referring back to the response I received from the member for Terra Nova—The Peninsulas when I asked him how we came to be debating Bill C-14 at the report stage today.

As mentioned, there has been a lot of talk about Bill C-9 in committee but, unfortunately, nothing has come of it because the Bloc Québécois proposed an amendment that sought to remove the religious exception as an excuse for promoting hatred. This frustrated the Conservatives, to use my colleague's wording, and as a result, we wasted a lot of time on this bill.

As also mentioned, Bill C-14 was a bill that the public wanted, that the Conservatives wanted, and that the Liberals wanted. Bill C-14 had to be passed quickly, which is why the two parties reached an agreement to speed up the process of getting it passed. I would say that this is where the problem lies. Corners were cut for political purposes, and I find that more than unfortunate.

This bill is important, not to mention substantial. At 40 pages long, it contains 84 clauses pertaining to both the Criminal Code and the YCJA, the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Some of the amendments, those that cleared up legal uncertainties and filled in gaps, were entirely welcome. Others, however, touched on crucial aspects of criminal law, including the presumption of innocence.

Following an agreement between the Liberals and the Conservatives, we ended up finding a way to set aside the debate of Bill C-9 on hate speech in order to discuss Bill C-14 at lightning speed. We ended up studying this hefty bill in committee, where we heard from witnesses during just two two-hour sessions. After that, we conducted a clause-by-clause study that took just one sitting. From 5 p.m. until about midnight we got through the whole thing in one go, because that was all the time we had. The decision had been made that it would be a short study.

I would argue that this is a shameful way of doing things, because it kind of invalidates the whole purpose of the role of MPs, which is to do a good job as legislators, in favour of something that is much more political and partisan. Both sides were determined to come out ahead. They wanted to be able to say that Bill C-14 has been passed, and too bad if we did it quickly, too bad if we cut corners, too bad if we have to redo the work later because we overlooked certain aspects, and even too bad if the Supreme Court eventually has to review certain provisions because we did not have time to analyze them properly and, more importantly, to properly discuss them with the people on the ground who will be applying them on a daily basis.

There are several aspects of the bill that affect what lawyers, Crown prosecutors and criminal defence attorneys do every day. I find it very unfortunate that more time was not taken to hear from them to find out whether they had any additional recommendations that could have been implemented to improve the bill. In some cases, this could perhaps have been done unanimously in committee. Some recommendations would probably have been very interesting to hear, but we did not have that opportunity because everything was done so quickly.

Nevertheless, I would like to make another point. When it comes to criminal law, we sometimes tend to fall back on wishful thinking, imagining that everything can be done through legislation and that this will solve problems that should really be solved through prevention or rehabilitation measures, which generally require more funding, more money. We are content to pass cosmetic legislation, which only gives the public a false sense of security.

I will give a very basic example. Increasing a sentence from 10 years to 15 years for a given crime will not necessarily reduce the incidence of that crime. Before committing a crime, no one considers the fact that the sentence is now 15 years in prison when it used to be 10, and then decides not to commit the crime because 10 years would have been fine but 15 years is too long. We might have a tendency at times to think that everything can be solved through legislation.

● (1035)

That being said, Bill C-14 is not all bad. We are voting in favour of it. We managed to improve it through amendments. One of those amendments addresses something that is at the heart of our new daily reality, namely the issue of firearms. Unfortunately, in recent years there has been a rise in gun crimes, particularly among young people. They are getting younger and younger and this is happening earlier and earlier in the continuum of violence whether the crimes are committed with firearms or the individual is in possession of firearms.

One of the Bloc Québécois's proposed amendments was accepted. It sought to broaden the definition of violent offence in the YCJA to include when an act is committed with a firearm. This has a major advantage in court. The problem we had before this inclusion was that a judge could not, in a case involving an offence committed with a firearm, order the detention of a young person unless the Crown prosecutor pleaded an exceptional provision. It was therefore necessary to plead an exception in order to have a youth detained for committing a crime with a firearm. By including firearms in the definition of violent offences, we are opening the door for judges to have greater discretion in ordering the detention of youth. This is a provision that will have a real and tangible impact on the ground and will be useful. We are very pleased that the Bloc Québécois amendment was adopted.

Another amendment that was adopted called for the bill to be reviewed in five years. This was done so a committee could review the implementation of the bill and any issues that may have arisen. The committee could then make recommendations on new provisions or amendments in light of the rights set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that are being amended by the bill, particularly, as I was saying, the presumption of innocence, since there is a reverse onus in certain cases for certain crimes. We believe it is important to have an obligation to review the bill again and within a relatively short period of time. The five-year review of the bill is a very welcome idea.

However, I want to come back to what I was saying earlier, which is that a little more time would probably have been useful. Some people may have held back from tabling amendments that might have seemed minor in order to focus on the major amendments, knowing that the deadline was quite short and that we might not have been able to study them for lack of time.

I will give an example that may rather trivial but that could have been discussed had there been more time. It again has to do with the YCJA. One of the legislative gaps in the YCJA had to do with the retention period for youth records. There were already provisions stipulating that, in the event of an absolute discharge, for example, a young person's record had to be kept for one year. The record is no longer retained after one year. After an acquittal or the dismissal of a charge, the record is kept for two months. However, there was no time frame for retaining records in cases where no charges were laid. The retention time for records was established by case law, and there seemed to be some ambiguity in that regard. Bill C-14 corrected this by stipulating that the retention period would be two years, but this still creates problems. The record is kept for two years if no charges are laid, but the legislation also already provides for a retention period of two years if an extrajudicial measure is imposed on the young person. The retention period is also two years if no charges are laid at the end of the investigation, so we have the same retention period for very different situations. If we had had more time, we could have discussed whether to review these retention periods so that a retention period might be 90 days in one case, one year in another and two years in a third case.

Because of time constraints, we were unable to have this discussion on issues that may seem trivial but that actually do fill in some legal gaps. Once again, I find it so unfortunate that parliamentarians were forced to work against extremely tight deadlines for purely partisan reasons, given that both sides of the House wanted to pass Bill C-14 quickly.

• (1040)

Unfortunately, some corners may have been cut a bit.

Jacques Ramsay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Jean, a riding that borders mine.

Bill C-14 needs to do three things. It needs to protect Canadian communities and protect victims, which it does. It also needs to protect the independence and impartiality of judges, which it does. The third thing it needs to do is ensure that Canadians have confidence in the justice system. This is about ensuring that the adminis-

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tration of justice is not brought into disrepute. I would argue that it fulfills these three objectives. It was important that it did so.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, I agree in principle. As I was saying, we are voting in favour of the bill. However, if we are going to have confidence in the administration of justice, then we also need to have confidence in the bill and we would have benefited from more time to review it properly.

It may be a bit pretentious of the government to say that the bills it introduces are perfect from the get-go. This may be a denial of the role of parliamentarians, which is to ensure that bills reflect the views of the population as a whole. The parties we represent have opposing views in some cases and similar views in others. I think we missed a great opportunity to boost public confidence if we had been able to do a more thorough job from the outset.

[*English*]

Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first off, I want to acknowledge my hon. colleague's concerns and frustrations over the way the bill has gotten here. The fact is that the Liberal government refused to make this a priority last fall. The position Parliament is now facing with the lack of debate is because of the partisan factors in place, which I acknowledge.

However, I want to ask the member more about why the bill is so important.

Over the last decade, crime has gone through the roof across this country and in my own riding, especially among repeat violent offenders. Bail reform is needed because of past Liberal bills that weakened our justice system and bail regime.

Is the member hearing about these challenges with repeat violent offenders in her own riding, from law enforcement and constituents?

[*Translation*]

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question raises many issues, but I would like to circle back to what I said earlier.

The objectives of this bill, as my colleague from La Prairie—Atateken clearly described, were to improve public confidence in the justice system and to strike a balance between various existing rights, including the public's right to feel safe and the accused's right, despite everything, to have a fair hearing and be presumed innocent. This delicate balance is often very difficult to achieve, so we would have been justified in taking the time to thoroughly analyze the bill with help from experts in the field.

Furthermore, as I mentioned in my speech, it is wishful thinking to believe that the law can do everything. We cannot solve all the world's problems with legislation alone. It would have been beneficial to hear from more people in the field explaining the vital role that rehabilitation and prevention have in crime reduction.

Government Orders

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on the thoroughness of her presentation. She has done her research and knows what she is talking about. She studied law herself, so it is interesting to hear from someone who knows the subject so well.

My question is perhaps more for her in her capacity as the Bloc Québécois House leader. I understand that currently, in the House, the government is trying to convince the public that our desire to debate bills, because we want to improve them, means that we are filibustering. That irritates me to no end. It seems to me that our job is to improve and enhance legislation.

Could my colleague comment on that?

• (1045)

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, it is true that both the government side and the official opposition side sometimes tend to equate the time spent studying a bill with wasted time. In some cases, they seem to see them as one and the same. If we spend a lot of time studying a bill, that is seen as filibustering. However, the reason we spend a lot of time studying matters like Bill C-15, which is about 630 pages long, is clearly that it involves a lot of work—all the more reason to refer it to several committees. Should that be considered filibustering? I do not think so.

Similarly, when the Conservatives debate a Bloc Québécois amendment on hate speech over several sittings, maybe we could call them out for filibustering, although it is not something I think we should do systematically. To say that the time we spend debating something in the House is filibustering is a bit of an insult to the work of parliamentarians.

[*English*]

Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am very pleased to speak to the bill, and I am also very pleased to have seconded the amendments submitted by the MP for Saanich—Gulf Islands, because I believe we share values. The bill required so much work, and her amendments can address so many of the flaws in the current iteration of Bill C-14.

I thank the Criminal Lawyers' Association for its work. In a submission it made, it said, "There is a bail crisis in Canada. But it is a crisis of detention, not release."

Bill C-14 is not the answer Canadians need. It is a knee-jerk reaction to sensational headlines and high-profile incidents involving repeat violent offenders. Working hand in hand, Conservatives and Liberals rushed the bill through committee, holding only three meetings, while ignoring the voices of experts and the people most affected.

The Prime Minister claims to represent Liberal leadership, yet he openly supports and advances Conservative policies. Over two-thirds of Canadians did not vote for a Conservative government, but this is the agenda now being forced on Canadians.

The NDP is firmly opposed to Bill C-14. As the NDP critic for both justice and indigenous affairs, I am opposed to the bill because it would fail Canadians. Instead of making communities safer, it

would cause great injustice, deepen inequality and trample on fundamental rights. Canadians deserve a better way forward.

By relying on tough-on-crime talking points, the government hopes to satisfy public pressure, but real issues are overlooked. People struggling with poverty, mental health and addiction would be pushed further into the system. The bill offers nothing in the way of treatment, rehabilitation or prevention. The bill would put more innocent people behind bars for longer, sometimes for months, before any trial. The cost would be paid by families and communities when people lose their housing, their job or even custody of their children, all before they have been found guilty of a crime.

Canada's current bail system is already one of the strictest in the world. In fact, 76% of people charged are now denied bail, up from 22% in 1978. More than 60% of people in provincial institutions are waiting for trial. One-third of the people detained before trial are never convicted of any crime; they sit in crowded jails without access to addiction or mental health programs. Indigenous people are drastically overrepresented in these numbers. Although they make up only 5% of Canada's population, about 30% of federal inmates are indigenous.

People who are experiencing poverty, homelessness, addiction or mental health challenges simply cannot meet the conditions for bail. They do not have a phone. They do not have stable housing or work, and they may not have friends or relatives to vouch for them. These are the people who would pay the price for the proposed policy.

Last year, the Department of Justice cut 264 jobs. In the fall budget, the Prime Minister mandated the reduction of justice department operations by an additional 15%. We know that reduction means more cuts are coming. These departmental cuts will affect supports for low-income Canadians, such as legal aid, bail support programs and community clinics.

The bill in its current form would narrow the principle of restraint, which would make it easier to keep people in detention. It would expand reverse onus by forcing an accused person to prove why they should get bail, instead of the Crown having to prove why they should not, weakening the principle of innocent until proven guilty. It would toughen sentences, amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act and make sweeping changes that would further tax an already overburdened system.

• (1050)

These are not evidence-based reforms. There is no clear data on how many people out on bail reoffend. We do not even collect standardized data on bail decisions. Rushing the bill through when experts and civil liberties groups ask for better information is not responsible law-making.

We already have evidence of programs that do work. The John Howard Society has supervised bail programs in Ontario communities that have success rates of over 90%, for a fraction of the cost of jail. These programs link people to addiction services, mental health services and social services, and they help people on bail meet the conditions set by the court. This is safer, less costly and more humane.

What we need are real investments in community-based supervision available across Canada. We need prevention and rehabilitation programs to tackle the root causes of crime, including poverty, trauma, systemic racism and colonial practices. We need national standards for data collection and risk assessment.

Debate in Parliament is supposed to serve Canadians and strengthen democracy, but on the bill before us, the Liberals and Conservatives are shutting out progressive voices like those of the NDP. They are refusing to listen to the experts who have studied Canada's criminal justice system. Instead they are moving quickly, relying on fear and political pressure rather than reason, evidence and open debate.

This approach leads to bad law and weakens democracy itself. When Parliament ignores the people advocating for civil liberties, the rights of indigenous peoples, and evidence-based solutions, we all lose. Democracy cannot thrive when important debate is suppressed and the government ignores the expertise of the people working on the front lines. Canadians deserve a criminal justice system rooted in fairness and facts, not political theatre. We need real solutions backed by evidence.

The NDP calls on the government to stop, listen and consult, especially with people who are experts and people who are most impacted by these laws. Democracy is best served when many voices are heard, not just one. That is why a stronger progressive presence in Parliament matters. When New Democrats speak up, critical issues like evidence-based justice, civil liberties and the rights of indigenous and marginalized people are not ignored. Canadians did not ask for a Conservative agenda, but that is what we are getting when Liberals and Conservatives rush bills like Bill C-14.

• (1055)

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although I agree with some parts of the member's intervention, I also think that prevention is a very important part of solving the criminal situation we have in the country. Rehabilitation upon conviction is also very important because one day people will be released, and we want to make sure they are released with a plan and with the ability to work.

Data is also a concern I have shared. We have been asking the provinces to share bail data with the federal government to strengthen our decision-making, but they have been unable to do so. That is something I plan to work on.

Government Orders

Would the member not agree that repeat violent offenders being released back out are a public safety risk, and that—

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

Lori Idlout: Uqaqtittiji, the fact that the member has stated that the government has not had data to develop the bill confirms what I have been saying: The bill was not based on evidence.

I agree that we need to make sure we have better prevention programs. The best way to do that is to make sure we do not keep more people in jail, which the bill intends to. That is what we need to focus on. As the Criminal Lawyers' Association has said, there is a crisis, but it is in detention not on release.

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the speech by my colleague from Nunavut was well thought out, but while I respect a lot of what she had to say, I do disagree with a couple of things. One is that I wish we actually had a Conservative agenda being brought forward by the government. The member also talks about a lack of evidence. Daily in the newspaper we see stories of victims of repeat violent offenders and victims of domestic violence from repeat violent offenders who are put in jail and are immediately brought back out. I think there is evidence of the failure of Bill C-75.

What would be the NPD solution to repeat violent offenders being let back out, abusing women and children and committing crimes against everyday Canadians?

Lori Idlout: Uqaqtittiji, the sensationalism that the media shares is creating fear that is not necessary, and the focus needs to be on addressing violent offenders.

I hope that with the way the bill is, it would not be overgeneralizing the people who would be most impacted. We have heard that bail works right now and that people who are violent offenders are kept in, and that is what the target needs to be of the bill. That is not what it is at this point.

Hon. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, does the member agree that removing conditional sentencing, allowing an offender, a repeat, violent, domestic abuser, back onto the streets, is uncalled for? The amendment would remove that provision.

Statements by Members

Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, the bill required so much work that it was hard to support it right away. I very much appreciate the amendments that were tabled by the MP for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

GULSHAN NANJI

Maggie Chi (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the life of Mrs. Gulshan Nanji, who passed away in December at the age of 92.

Mrs. Nanji arrived in Canada from Uganda with her family in 1972, and was a steadfast champion of her family's long-standing commitment to the North York General Hospital in my riding of Don Valley North.

Together with her late husband, Mr. Pyarali Nanji, Mrs. Nanji played a transformational role with her vision and generosity, which is reflected in the Gulshan and Pyarali G. Nanji orthopaedic and plastics centre, the Nanji Family Foundation centre for medical imaging, the Nanji academic centre, the Nanji ambulatory care centre and many other initiatives that have strengthened care for our community.

Mrs. Nanji and the Nanji family are a testament to the transformative power of generosity. While we mourn her passing, we celebrate the remarkable legacy she leaves behind, a legacy that will carry forward and continue to inspire and connect people for generations.

* * *

• (1100)

KOSOVO INDEPENDENCE DAY

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next week, Kosovo will celebrate the 18th anniversary of its independence. Canada has had a long and proud friendship with Kosovo, and I am proud, as a Canadian, that we were one of the first countries to recognize Kosovo's independence.

My wife is from Kosovo, and we spent part of our honeymoon there, where we enjoyed amazing food and I learned so much about their rich culture. Kosovars are deeply proud of their country. I have one piece of advice: Anyone who goes to Kosovo should go to Rahovec for a macchiato. It is the best coffee I have had in my life.

My son, William Kastriot Seeback, is named after their national hero, a man who stood for courage and independence. I want to join with Kosovars around the world celebrating independence next week here in Canada and abroad.

Urime Dita e Pavarësisë.

* * *

WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE

Karim Bardeesy (Taiaiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week we marked the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.

At a time when, in some parts of the world, the scientific community is being discredited and dismembered, Canada chooses a different path. We choose to invest in discovery, to trust evidence and to honour our late colleague, Kirsty Duncan. We choose to celebrate this and do this with the women and girls who are driving breakthroughs in labs, classrooms and communities across our country.

Last month at the Canadian Science Policy Centre conference, I had the privilege of hearing Dr. Shohini Ghose, professor of physics and computer science at Wilfrid Laurier University, as she accepted a Trailblazer Award. She reminded us that some comets blaze brightly and some do not, but all are equally extraordinary. She read a sci-ku, a science haiku, of her own devising:

Let us be quantum
Entangled across space time
Hearts and minds as well

This week we recognize Dr. Ghose and the many women whose curiosity, courage and brilliance have shaped our world and the generations of girls like my daughter who, because of them, know they belong in science.

* * *

CHRYSALIS

Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding work of Chrysalis, an Alberta society for citizens with disabilities located in my riding of Edmonton Northwest.

Chrysalis demonstrates a principle Albertans strongly believe in, which is that dignity is found in work, contribution and self-reliance. For nearly 60 years, Chrysalis has empowered thousands of people with disabilities to pursue meaningful employment and greater independence while contributing to Edmonton and Alberta economies. Through practical supports and strong partnerships with local employers, Chrysalis always delivers results for the families they serve.

Led by executive director Melinda Noyes and her dedicated team, the society's innovation in art, culinary and cultural programming has helped set them apart.

When we remove barriers and focus on ability, we strengthen our workforce and our country. As Conservatives, we will always champion policies that support opportunity, responsibility and the power of meaningful employment for all Canadians.

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[Translation]

WORLD CANCER DAY

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier—Gloucester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge World Cancer Day, which took place last Wednesday. It is a time when the entire world comes together in the spirit of awareness, solidarity and hope.

It is a day to honour those who have lost their lives and those who are still fighting and to recognize the caregivers who show extraordinary courage every day.

In particular, we remember Terry Fox. His perseverance united a nation, his courage inspired the world and his determination continues to guide us and unite us.

[*English*]

Last Wednesday, the Terry Fox Foundation announced that it has surpassed the milestone of \$1 billion raised in support of life-saving cancer research, thanks to the contributions of millions of volunteers, partners and supporters from coast to coast to coast. This historic achievement reflects the generosity of Canadians and their unwavering commitment to a future without cancer.

Let this day be more than just a moment. Let it inspire us to keep on moving. Let us honour those fighting cancer by supporting progress wherever we can. Let us carry forward the journey that Terry Fox began. Let us finish it.

* * *

AFFORDABILITY

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, across Canada, seniors are feeling the pressure of rising costs in very real ways. One of my constituents recently told me she feels like the walls are closing in, as her fixed income is stretched further each month.

This is why Conservatives are focused on practical solutions that would help bring costs down and restore stability for seniors and their families. Conservatives have constantly put forward constructive ideas and reached out to work with other parties, including through opposition motions that offer real, workable solutions. The recent meeting between the leader of the official opposition and the Prime Minister underscores the urgency of this work.

Canadians are looking for results, not rhetoric. Conservatives will always set aside differences to find common ground when it will lead to real results for Canadians. We urge other parties to do the same and focus on delivering solutions that ease affordability pressures for seniors and families.

* * *

• (1105)

NON-PROFIT SECTOR

Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February 15 marks the beginning of Non-Profit Sector Appreciation Week, and I am proud to rise today to celebrate the heart of our communities: our non-profits and the people behind them. These are our neighbours. They are the friendly faces who step up when someone needs a ride, a meal, a place to call home or a caring professional to talk to. Their dedication does not make headlines most days, but it makes a world of difference in Kitchener—Conestoga and across the nation.

We are Canadian. We celebrate those who strengthen our communities through compassion, service and the belief that we are better when we lift each other up. During this week of appreciation,

Statements by Members

coinciding with national Kindness Week, I encourage everyone to get involved and volunteer their time, lend their skills or simply reach out to a local non-profit organization to ask how they can help. Sometimes the smallest gesture becomes the moment that someone remembers the most.

I thank all non-profit sector workers and volunteers. Their work reflects the very best of who we are as Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

HEARST

Gaëtan Malette (Kapusking—Timmins—Mushkegowuk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am calling attention to one of the 46 communities in my riding: Hearst.

Nestled in the boreal forest of northeastern Ontario, Hearst is a town whose main employers are two sawmills, a plywood plant and Villeneuve Construction, a civil engineering and road maintenance company.

The town of Hearst was forged by generations of northern workers and families who built not only industries, but also strong communities and a sustainable future for their children. Its language and traditions make the region unique. In Hearst, French is not a secondary language; it is the language of work. The town's bilingual character is part of our daily lives, our economy and our future.

Today, Hearst is an emblem of Franco-Canadian culture and the determination to never give up.

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VALENTINE'S DAY

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is Valentine's Day, a holiday for lovers.

We know that some people think Valentine's Day is too commercial or too corny, and some say that lovers do not need a holiday. Others who are single simply do not care. As for me, I think that we need a holiday that celebrates love now more than ever.

When times are uncertain, when tragedy strikes, when people are wondering what the world is coming to, in times like these, we need to love one another now more than ever. We need to tell those around us that we love them and we need to be reminded that we are loved by those we care about. I truly believe that this is necessary and that setting a day aside for love is still a good idea.

I want to wish a happy Valentine's Day to everyone, including all those who love, those who want to love, those who need love, and those I love, including my partner, my children and my grandchildren.

*Statements by Members**[English]***INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week was International Development Week, and it was remarkable to learn from partners whose efforts make Canada a leader in development work around the globe.

From speaking at Carleton University about how refugees in Canada can contribute to development work globally, to discussing how to bridge the gap between trade and development, it was a very productive and enlightening week. I also had the honour to host the brave women of the Afghan Women Parliamentarians and Leaders Network, who shared the impactful stories of their work to fight for peace, democracy and women's rights in Afghanistan.

Canada's international development work makes me proud to be a Canadian, and I am glad to have the chance to support it.

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OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was 16 years ago this month when Canadians from coast to coast came together to celebrate the most dominant performance in winter Olympic history, with 26 medals, 14 of them gold, and nothing more iconic, of course, than Sidney Crosby's golden goal, which eliminated the United States and reclaimed Canada's rightful place as the undisputed hockey nation of the world. It was a moment etched into the very memory and identity of this great country, a defining moment of national unity and national pride. Whether people were watching that final game from their living room, at a bar or with the thousands crammed outside of LiveCity in Yaletown, as I was, it was one of those rare instances of pure, unadulterated joy.

I know I speak for all members of the House when I wish the amazing athletes representing Canada the best of luck and all the success in the world. To Nate, Sid, Connor and the boys on the ice, let us go get another gold medal.

* * *

• (1110)

*[Translation]***TRIBUTE TO THÉRÈSE-DE BLAINVILLE
CONSTITUENTS**

Madeleine Chenette (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some people in Thérèse-De Blainville really know how to go above and beyond.

Today, I would like to pay tribute to Serge Paquette, who has devoted more than a quarter of a century to serving the Town of Blainville. Throughout all those years, Serge has been much more than an elected official. He has been a supportive neighbour, a beacon in the community and a source of support for everyone. He could be found at community events, working with organizations and on the ground, where real life happens on a daily basis. His commitment has guided the town's evolution and strengthened the human fabric of our community. I would also like to acknowledge the role that his wife, Eliane Boisvert Paquette, has played. Well

known and respected in Blainville, she brings warmth and humanity to local life. Her presence and involvement are an integral part of the legacy they have built together. Their journey encapsulates the true meaning of public service: a daily commitment based on human relationships and a sincere desire to see one's community thrive.

On behalf of the people of Thérèse-De Blainville, I would like to thank Serge Paquette for his remarkable career and pay tribute to Ms. Boisvert Paquette.

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*[English]***HOUSING**

Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian dream of home ownership is fading for young Canadians. A new report from CMHC highlights that homebuilding is expected to fall in each of the next three years and that housing prices will rise. Another report from the Missing Middle Initiative shows that nearly half of young Canadians are having to leave the community that they were raised in because they cannot afford to live there. The report states further that over 90% of young Canadians are concerned about the state of housing in Canada.

It is time to restore hope in the promise of Canada, hope in the promise that, if people work hard and play by the rules, they can afford a good home in a safe neighbourhood. That is why Conservatives are advocating for a plan to take the sales tax off of new homes under \$1.3 million, a plan to cut bureaucracy and accelerate homebuilding so that all Canadians can afford a place to call home.

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*[Translation]***SCOUTING WEEK 2026**

Jacques Ramsay (La Prairie—Atateken, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to scouting week 2026, which is taking place across Canada from February 16 to 22.

The francophone scouting movement includes over 10,000 youths and 3,700 adult volunteers. Becoming a scout means embracing the values of service to others, leadership, solidarity and respect for nature. Simply put, scouting means patiently helping 10,000 young people learn to be responsible citizens and get involved in their communities.

I would like to send a special shout-out to the 33rd Candiac-La Prairie scout group in my riding of La Prairie—Mackenzie—Atateken. These enthusiastic young people and their mentor, François De l'Étoile, worked hard raising funds at Christmas markets for their trip this summer to the Kandersteg International Scout Centre in Switzerland. Their initiative and determination would make Baden-Powell proud.

I would like to give a scout salute to everyone participating in scouting week 2026, and I thank them for their outstanding commitment.

*Oral Questions**[English]***AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY**

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have signed on to using \$52 billion of taxpayer money to subsidize EVs. However, there is one big problem, and that is that only a single EV model is manufactured in Canada. Consequently, 52 billion taxpayer dollars will be going directly to subsidize foreign EVs and foreign auto workers. This is at a time when thousands of Canadian auto jobs have been lost in the face of U.S. tariffs.

Meanwhile, the Liberals are opening the floodgates to 50,000 Chinese EVs. This is a straight-up \$52-billion foreign giveaway that undermines Canadian autos and Canadian jobs. We literally cannot make this stuff up. Liberal incompetence knows no bounds.

* * *

• (1115)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, less than a year ago, Canadians elected a prime minister and a large Liberal government. At the end of the day, part of that platform was to bring together a legislative agenda to deal with crime and issues such as lawful access, hate propaganda, bail reform and restoring mandatory minimums. We have substantial legislation to deal with making our communities safer. The problem is that the Conservative Party wants to filibuster the crime package, which is not serving Canadians in a very positive way.

Further, we have the budget implementation bill, which would deliver for Canadians in every way.

I am calling upon the Conservative Party to stop filibustering and to start listening to what Canadians want. They want a strong, healthy Canada. Conservatives need to get off their back ends and start supporting our legislation.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[English]***HOUSING**

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have stolen all our ideas.

A recent Missing Middle Initiative report shows just how many young people have lost hope of ever owning a home. For parents and grandparents, the signs have been obvious for years. If we are honest about it, the problem started well before Donald Trump became the President of the United States. Despite the Liberals throwing tens of billions of dollars at the problem, the fact remains that 10 years of structural incompetence and Liberal policies have caused house prices and rent to double and, with that, the lost hope of home ownership for a generation.

Here is an idea: Why not remove the GST on all new homes to start restoring the hope, at least, of home ownership among young Canadians?

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was most disappointing to see the Conservatives, yesterday, voting against a national strategy for housing for young Canadians.

On this side, we care deeply about housing affordability for young Canadians. That is why we have the Build Canada Homes act before the House, which would catalyze innovation in home-building and bring down home costs for young Canadians and all Canadians.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we voted against more bureaucracy and more red tape instead of getting the job done. Our kids are worried, and our grandkids are worried. In 10 years, home ownership among 30- to 34-year-olds fell from 60% to 52%. It is even steeper among young people: 93% of gen Zs and millennials are worried about the state of housing in Canada today. Unfortunately, unaffordability is reshaping communities, with nearly half of young Canadians reporting that they have considered leaving their current city or province. This is not a tariff issue. It is a self-inflicted wound caused by failed policies.

Can we at least agree to start restoring the hope of owning a home among young people by removing the GST on all new homes?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has taken a step in that direction. The GST measure is known to the member, and it is awaiting royal assent.

With respect to getting home ownership going in this country, I agree. We need to collectively do more to push that. This is something the Canadian Home Builders' Association, in particular, has emphasized.

They have also emphasized the need to attack regulatory red tape at the municipal level. That is why the government has put in place the housing accelerator fund. In return for federal dollars, municipalities are required to be more flexible when it comes to zoning. That is exactly what we are seeing in almost 240 municipalities.

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal government policy is crushing the dream of home ownership for Canadians, but it does not need to be that way. We have the land, the resources and the skilled workers to address this problem, but a staggering 87% of Canadians are concerned about housing in Canada, and nine in 10 of those people are young Canadians.

Oral Questions

The Liberals have an opportunity to work with Conservatives to take a real team Canada approach. Will they work with us to take the tax off new homes and slash development charges by half to restore the dream of home ownership for young Canadians?

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have the opportunity to work with us on this side of the House by supporting the budget implementation act, which has funding for housing-enabling infrastructure through the build Canada strong fund. It also includes measures to decrease the GST, in particular for first-time homebuyers and young Canadians. Importantly, the Conservatives can support the Build Canada Homes act, which would catalyze innovation and modern methods of construction to bring down homebuilding costs for everyone.

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all those words and all the billions they spend, the Liberals, still, are not getting homes built. The government's own housing agency, the CMHC, is blowing the whistle. Construction of new homes will drop by as much as 18% with all the “catalyzing” the Liberals are doing.

Canadians know that another Liberal bureaucracy is not the answer. That is why, today, we approach the Liberals and extend our hand in the spirit of collaboration with real solutions that would help address the problems Canadians see and the end of the dream of home ownership.

Will the Liberals slash development charges or cut them in half, take the tax off new homes and work with us today?

• (1120)

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are all talk, and we are all action. In 100 days, Build Canada Homes has secured landmark agreements with provinces and cities. It has advanced construction on six federal lands. We have lined up thousands of new homes for construction. Over the past month alone, affordable housing projects have gotten well under way in Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario. We are ready to deliver 7,500 homes right away. This is how we accelerate housing.

The momentum is building. The Conservatives should join us.

[*Translation*]

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is forecasting a decline of nearly 20% in housing starts over the next two years. Less production means less supply. Demand, on the other hand, continues to rise. What is going on? Prices are going up.

In Montmorency—Charlevoix, the average price of a home has gone from \$249,000 a decade ago to more than \$500,000 today. Week after week, the Liberals congratulate themselves for their policies. However, the construction industry is talking about a lost decade for home ownership.

When will these announcements lead to shovels in the ground and construction in the real world, not just on paper?

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are talking

about housing. I have met with the mayors in my riding. They are eagerly awaiting the historic investments in municipal infrastructure that we need to build more homes in Quebec.

I urge my colleague to vote in favour of the budget implementation bill so we can distribute the funds that our municipalities need to build housing in Quebec.

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yes, as my colleague said, everyone is waiting.

Young Canadians are having a hard time with the cost of living and the cost of rent. The Liberals tell us they are taking action, but nothing is being done except announcements, photo ops and empty promises. They have a plan: “one day”; “we will see”; “build something”; “potentially”; “surely”; “soon”; “a project is being reviewed right now, but will be announced later”.

I have a clear proposal for the Liberals. Why not eliminate the tax on homes under \$1.3 million, new homes, to jumpstart construction and give our young people access to home ownership?

Will they finally use our idea?

Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the good news is that Build Canada Homes is delivering results.

In our first 100 days, we took action by signing major agreements with provinces and cities and moving forward with six construction projects on federal land, including one in my riding of Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne. Yes, the Longue-Rive project in Longueuil is building more than 1,000 housing units, 40% of which are off-market.

That is what it means to deliver on promises. I invite my colleagues on the other side to share in the good news with us.

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PENSIONS

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to the government, 85,000 pensioners are experiencing problems with their OAS because of the Cúram software, the same software that has incurred almost \$5 billion in cost overruns. It has produced 85,000 victims and cost \$5 billion more in public funds than anticipated, yet the Liberals are acting like there is nothing wrong. They are treating 85,000 people as though they are rare and isolated cases, and they think it is normal to blow the budget like that without explanation.

When will there be an independent public inquiry into Cúram?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the modernization of this system is a necessary upgrade of a 60-year-old system. It already offers a faster and easier way to access benefits.

Currently, 7.7 million seniors are receiving their monthly benefits this way. This is the largest digital transformation initiative ever undertaken by the Government of Canada. Service Canada is striving to ensure that anyone facing urgent problems or needs is helped quickly.

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is not talking about the 85,000 people affected or the \$5 billion in cost overruns.

I would like to give the Liberals a short briefing so that they understand the extent of the problem. In Quebec, with SAAQclie, ministers resigned over cost overruns of \$500 million. The Liberals have now basically reached \$5 billion in cost overruns, but they are simply shrugging their shoulders. They are so used to spending Quebecers' money like water that they think they do not need to be accountable. Well, they are wrong. It is time for an independent public inquiry.

When will they order a public inquiry?

• (1125)

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is the largest digital transformation ever undertaken. The vast majority of seniors are registered in the system and are receiving the right benefits on time.

We have contacted members' offices to ask them for the names of the people affected and we have also offered members a briefing on the system.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we need an independent public inquiry into Cúram because the Liberals are out of touch with reality.

Imagine causing financial problems for 85,000 retirees and thinking that it is no big deal. Imagine letting 85,000 people fall through the cracks thanks to a computer system and responding by just asking us to pass on their names and saying the government will look into the issues. There are people who have not received their old age security payments for nine months.

What are these people supposed to live on?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to support seniors, including through the Canadian dental care plan and the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit.

Processing OAS claims is a top priority, and the department is working hard to address this issue. The department has implement-

Oral Questions

ed an OAS action plan to mobilize all available resources to resolve this issue.

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[English]

HOUSING

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, day by day, year by year, the dream of home ownership is fading away for young Canadians. The Prime Minister's promise was for 500,000 new homes, but CMHC reported this week that he will actually build only 216,000 and that homebuilding will decline every year to 2028.

Does the Prime Minister dispute the CMHC's findings, and if he does not, will he admit that he made a promise he knew he could never keep? We all know what that is called.

Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and to the Secretary of State (International Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is precisely the reason that the Prime Minister and his government are completely focused on building more homes in our country. It is why we have brought in a piece of legislation, Bill C-20, which would create Build Canada Homes, which would ensure that we build more housing across the country. That is why we have hired somebody like Ana Bailão, who has the knowledge and expertise to make this happen. We are taking concrete actions. We are not just talking about things. I am really happy to hear that there is some talk of collaboration from the opposition. That is a good sign. Let us work together to build more housing across our country.

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, where are the homes? They keep talking about building, but we see no action. In fact, not only will homebuilding decrease; CMHC says that home prices will rise. We will have less supply, more demand and higher prices. That is a nightmare scenario for young Canadians. It appears to me that the Prime Minister's lofty political promise was nothing more than Romeo's lie when he swore his love on blessed yonder moon.

Will the Prime Minister instead adopt our proposal to cut the GST on all new homes?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I am going to pause very briefly, being the MP from Stratford, to say the member is very close to the line there, even when quoting Shakespeare.

Oral Questions

David Myles (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and to the Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I am home, talking with constituents in Fredericton—Oromocto, what I hear is that they appreciate that our Prime Minister and our government have a plan, a plan to diversify our exports, foster and facilitate interprovincial trade and make historic investments in the infrastructure that is going to enable all of this. This is going to mean a stronger economy, more housing, better-paying jobs and long-term careers. I also hear that they want us to work together, so let us work together and get this done.

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian dream of home ownership is fading for young Canadians. CMHC now warns that homebuilding will fall over the next three years, with 2028 housing starts projected to be down 18% compared to 2025, even as prices continue to rise.

At the same time, nearly half of young Canadians say they are being forced to leave the communities they were raised in because they cannot afford to live there.

When will the government adopt our plan to remove the GST on all new homes and restore the dream of home ownership for young Canadians?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a new member. I want to commend him. He has been very active in the community. It has been good to get to know him and to work with him. I know he cares also, of course, about home ownership. He met with the London Home Builders' Association recently. What it has shared is exactly what I said earlier, that regulatory red tape at the municipal level stands as the largest impediment to getting more homes built. Unless we address that, there will not be home ownership worthy of being called the right outcome for Canadians. What we need to do is push that. The housing accelerator fund does exactly that. London is moving in that direction. Other municipalities are too.

• (1130)

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect, despite government announcements and staged photo ops, the data clearly shows that we are not building enough homes to meet Canada's needs. An insufficient supply of new homes is why CMHC expects prices to keep rising. Just this week I also met with London members of the Canadian Home Builders' Association, and they informed me that taxes and regulatory costs have risen 700% over 25 years and now make up 30% of the price of a new home.

At what point will the government acknowledge these burdens and adopt our plan to remove GST on new homes?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and to the Secretary of State (Defence Procurement), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has a plan to build Canada strong. We have a plan to create good jobs across the country and to attract investment across this country. We are building industrial capacity, building affordable homes and investing in our future. We have also introduced a new buy Canadian policy, so that we are our own best customer. That is how we build Canada strong.

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's own housing agency shows fewer homes being built over the next three years, while home prices will only rise. A third of homebuilders are building less because they are forced to lay off workers. Young men and women in B.C. are seeing the dream of home ownership fading. Years of Liberal homebuilding programs have not delivered.

Will the Liberals adopt our plan to remove the GST on all new homes to help builders build and young Canadians buy?

Wade Grant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from British Columbia for the question. I am so proud to stand on this side of the House as we build Canada strong from coast to coast to coast. Building Canada's housing is very important not only in cities and provinces but in first nations communities. I live in a first nations community with a housing list of over 500 people. These people want to come home to their communities. That is why I am so proud of this new policy. It is why I know my children are going to be able to live where they please with their families for future generations.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation just said that by 2028, new housing starts will fall by as much as 18.1%. Meanwhile, the Liberals continue to bring in hundreds of thousands more temporary foreign workers and have no plans to get millions with expired visas to leave. Housing starts are not keeping up with immigration, and the Canadian dream of home ownership is fading for young people.

When will the government adopt our positive plan to incentivize homebuilding by removing the GST on all new homes and restore the dream of home ownership for young Canadians?

Hon. Eleanor Olszewski (Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience and Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are building big in this country, and that means building more homes.

While the Conservatives belittle what has been done so far, it is time to check some facts. Calgary is a recognized national leader in terms of fast-tracking housing projects using federal program funding like the housing accelerator fund and is building affordable, inclusive and resilient communities. If the Conservatives really cared about housing for young people, they would support our plan, which will deliver real results for Calgarians and Albertans.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that rents have doubled in Calgary, and it is not just the dream of owning a home that is fading for young Canadians. Data shows that the prospects of getting a good-paying, entry-level job for Canadian youth have never been dimmer. Canada's economy is slow, and now artificial intelligence is changing entry-level jobs in almost every field, including law and accounting.

Given all of this, why are the Liberals bringing in hundreds of thousands more temporary foreign workers, with no plans to get millions with expired visas to leave, instead of incentivizing businesses to hire and give hope to Canadians?

Hon. Eleanor Olszewski (Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience and Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, affordability starts with opportunity, and that means making sure every Canadian can get a good-paying career. Our plan is working. Just last month in Alberta alone, nearly 42,000 good, full-time careers were created. That is more people earning paycheques, putting money back in the economy and getting ahead. At a moment when Canadians are focused on affordability, it is time for Conservatives to stop blocking the budget implementation act and back a plan that is delivering real results.

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• (1135)

[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois met with the Prime Minister yesterday. He emphasized the need to put an end to Driver Inc. scheme. However, the battle is far from over. Not only is the federal government not doing much about this issue, but it is, in fact, part of the problem. Canada Post has contracted no fewer than 25 companies that do business with Driver Inc. drivers. The federal government is feeding the beast with our tax dollars.

When will the Liberals get Driver Inc. drivers off our streets instead of getting out their chequebooks?

[English]

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and to the Secretary of State (Defence Procurement), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post is proud to work with many trucking companies across this country, and in doing so, the CEO of Canada Post has assured us, there is no engagement with the Driver

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Inc. model. All contracted suppliers are provided with clear expectations, a code of conduct to abide by and consequences for non-compliance. As a government, we expect Canada Post to abide by these standards.

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in order to solve the problem, the Liberals should start by acknowledging that it exists and stop making it worse. Canada Post is doing business with at least 25 companies that hire Driver Inc. drivers.

We gave the Liberals 10 solutions to get these dangerous drivers off our streets, but the problem persists. Not only are the Liberals not using our solutions, but the federal government actually hires Driver Inc. drivers through Canada Post.

That raises a fundamental question that every family and every victim has asked but that has gone unanswered: Why do the Liberals not want to solve the problem?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and to the Secretary of State (Defence Procurement), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post is proud to work with many trucking companies across the country.

In doing so, the CEO of Canada Post has assured us that there is no engagement with the Driver Inc. model. All contracted suppliers are provided with clear expectations, a code of conduct to abide by and consequences for non-compliance. As a government, we expect Canada Post to abide by these standards.

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[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister once called China our biggest security threat. Now he tells us that it is a strategic partner. He told Canadian canola farmers to expect lower tariffs by March 1, yet just yesterday we learned that Beijing is delaying its decision until at least March 9. Last time I checked, partners keep their word.

Our farmers deserve better than uncertainty, shifting timelines and empty promises, yet that is all the Liberal government has delivered.

Is there truly a deal to reduce tariffs on Canadian canola, or did the Prime Minister mislead our farmers about getting results?

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will start by saying that our canola growers grow the best canola in the world. They are doing tremendous work.

Oral Questions

Yes, we have a great partnership, a renewed strategic partnership, with China to export canola. In fact, we know that Chinese importers have already secured 650,000 metric tons of Canadian canola, which is 25% of China's total import last year. The door is wide open now, and we will continue to engage in reaching a strong—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that did not instill any confidence for Canadian canola growers.

The Prime Minister's deal with Beijing opens our streets up to 49,000 Chinese EVs annually, jeopardizing our security and our auto jobs. He assured Canadians that everything was fine, telling us that we would have canola tariffs dropped by March 1. However, with yesterday's announcement that China is pushing back its decision on tariffs until March 9, we cannot now be sure that he is delivering anything at all. Farmers are left hung out to dry, and in exchange for what? Fancy photo ops and false promises.

Can our farmers actually expect lower tariffs, or was the Prime Minister merely hoodwinked into making concessions for nothing in return?

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague that the new partnership the government has secured with China is being implemented. We have orders, and in fact, orders have been placed. Commerce is resuming right now with China, so it is good news. I invite my colleague to come to us if he wants more detail, but commerce is resuming with China.

• (1140)

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, commerce resuming does not mean tariffs are coming off. Beijing has postponed its decision on whether it will reduce tariffs on Canadian canola just weeks before seeding begins. Decisions need to be made now by farmers. Last year many farmers, including me, chose not to seed canola because of those tariffs and the price collapse. Yet the Prime Minister stood before Canadians and said that tariffs would fall to 15% by March 1.

The Liberals promised action. All they have delivered is dust. Did the Prime Minister mislead Canadian farmers?

Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and to the Secretary of State (International Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will not rest until normal trade resumes to make sure that canola is being shipped to all markets around the world, including China. That is why the Prime Minister and this government have been working really hard. That is why the Prime Minister visited China to help reduce the tariffs on canola.

As my colleague said earlier, we are so fortunate to have the best canola grown right here in this country. There is a demand for that canola across the world. That is why we are negotiating free trade agreements with countries like the Philippines and Indonesia right now where we can export canola, and we will continue to do that work.

Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month during the Prime Minister's visit to Beijing, he announced that he finally had a deal to roll back that country's tariffs on Canadian canola. He even had a grandiose signing ceremony with Xi Jinping in front of Canadian and Chinese flags. Yesterday, however, the Chinese announced that they were postponing their decision until March 9.

Is Beijing backing out of the deal, or was the Prime Minister misleading Canadian canola farmers in the first place?

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just answered and reassured my colleague that trade is resuming with China. I also want to highlight that the agriculture minister will be in Mexico next week opening even more of the market. We secured a market for meat, and now we want to expand these opportunities. We are not stopping there, because we have the best food in the world. The world wants our food, and we will make that possible.

Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite the Prime Minister announcing that China will reduce tariffs on canola by March 1, reports say the Chinese commerce ministry revealed that it only committed to making a decision by March 9.

What kind of master negotiator is the Prime Minister when he refuses to acknowledge that the deals he promised with China and the U.S. are falling through? Canadian farmers are looking for the truth to be able to plan this year's crops, to ensure that Canadian households can afford to eat Canadian quality products. Did the Prime Minister mislead Canadian farmers into thinking he got a deal done on Canadian canola?

Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and to the Secretary of State (International Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is working day in and day out to ensure that we are diversifying on trade and working with as many countries as possible. As we speak, the Minister of International Trade is visiting places like Singapore and Vietnam so we can create opportunities in those markets.

The Standing Committee on International Trade recently sent two bills back to the House, one dealing with the United Kingdom and the other dealing with Indonesia, so we can finalize those trade agreements. Every single one of those agreements ensures that our agricultural farmers, including Kelowna farmers, have new markets in which to sell their products.

*Oral Questions***FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Bruce Fanjoy (Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the HUMA committee earlier this week, members of the Breakfast Club of Canada and the Coalition for Healthy School Food talked about the real impact of the national school food program on kids and families. When a motion was brought forward to study those impacts, Conservative and Bloc members chose to adjourn debate before it even began.

Can the parliamentary secretary for children and youth remind the House of how this program is supporting children and helping families with affordability, and why it matters that we continue to move this work forward?

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 thank my colleague for representing the great people of Carleton and the issues they care about.

Kids cannot learn if they are hungry. A new study by the Breakfast Club of Canada shows that school food programs improve educational outcomes, reduce childhood obesity and increase disposable incomes for families facing rising costs. Canada was the last country in the G7 to have a national school food program. Now we do. The budget makes it permanent.

It is a shame that Conservative members do not think kids' health and school food are worth studying or voting for.

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EMPLOYMENT

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for almost two years, flight attendants told the government and parliamentarians they were working for free, and we believed them. Conservatives introduced a bill to fix the problem. Liberals did not believe them and ordered a study. After six months, the study determined that we need to do another study. This stuff can't be made up.

Why will the Liberals not believe flight attendants when they say they are working for free and adopt the Conservative bill that would fix the problem, instead of ordering another study to study a study?

• (1145)

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, nobody should work for free in this country. We take any claim of unpaid work seriously.

After allegations of unpaid work in the airline sector, we launched a probe to get to the bottom of the claims. Phase one of that probe has now been published. We are going to keep investigating to ensure that work is happening in accordance with the Canada Labour Code.

Workers must be paid for the hours they work, and we are going to make sure that employers follow the rules.

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the probe the Liberals ordered determined they needed to do another probe. I am sure there are a lot of things we could say about that.

Here are the facts:

The head of CUPE Air Canada came to committee when we were looking into this and asked what the Liberals were going to study next. Is water wet? He went on to say, about this study, "We called for action last summer, and instead we got a study that has resulted in a promise to perform an additional study". This is really thin gruel from the Liberals.

Conservatives know flight attendants work for free. That is why we introduced a bill to fix it. Why do the Liberals not steal that idea, like they steal all our ideas, and help flight attendants instead of doing another study?

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 stand by the work we are doing. We want to take action that is informed, and informed by evidence. We have asked all sides in this to provide that evidence.

Phase two of the probe will collect more evidence from airlines and unions to ensure that employers are complying with the Canada Labour Code. This step is necessary to provide additional clarity on how the airline sector's pay structure aligns with the code. This is important information for us to know and get right.

Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, devastated, anxious and fearful of what the future may hold are just some of the emotions, I am sure, that the 25,000 Canadians who lost their jobs last month undoubtedly feel. These are individuals, like all Canadians, who, even when working, were already struggling with the cost of groceries, the cost of rent and the cost of just getting by. Now, not only are they dealing with a cost of living crisis, but they are also out of a job.

The Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7. When will his policies deliver anything other than job losses, massive deficits and the highest cost of groceries among our economic peers?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I am going to allow the member to answer the question, but I will remind members that they should be in their own seat when they ask a question.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Oral Questions

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

An hon. member: They're always mature.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Order. I am going to ask members to restrain themselves and not be inappropriate or childlike with the comments they make.

The hon. member.

Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, the member's question gives me the opportunity to say that Bill C-19 has received royal assent. It shows what we can do when we work together in the House of Commons. This is the groceries and essentials benefit, which will provide up to \$1,900 for a family of four in what is, certainly, a difficult time for this country.

I also urge the member to look past politics and to work with all members in the House. To echo what Prime Minister Harper said, let us work together on behalf of the country in a very difficult moment. We can do it.

Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, working together is great, but the question was about jobs.

In the real world, Liberal rhetoric and platitudes do not create a single job. GDP was flat in November. Real GDP is projected to decline. The Bank of Canada says that business investment will remain weak. Meanwhile, 5,400 forestry workers in coastal B.C. are already out of a job.

The government promised to build nation-building projects and create jobs at a speed we have never seen before. My question for the government is this: Where are these projects and where are these jobs?

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be associated with a government whose record on jobs is very strong. Jobs are growing faster here than even in the United States, and incomes are growing faster than inflation.

The next part of our plan, the budget implementation act via Bill C-15, is before Parliament right now. The hon. member opposite can work with his colleagues and work with us to ensure speedy passage of the bill in order to forward the major projects the member is talking about and the economic growth that is behind the bill.

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THE ECONOMY

Burton Bailey (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the price of food is out of control. Too many families in Alberta are struggling. In Alberta alone, grocery prices have risen 50% in five years. Beef prices are up 53%, eggs are up 37% and vegetables are up 20%. These are not luxuries. These are essentials.

Canadians cannot afford the Liberal government. The Prime Minister said that he should be judged by the cost at the grocery store. Well, Judgment Day is coming.

When will the Prime Minister remove taxes and start getting things built so Canadians can live affordably?

• (1150)

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a big announcement addressing this very issue because we know it is something Canadians are struggling with. Therefore, we announced the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit. This not only gives a one-time benefit to Canadian families but also helps them for the next five years.

We are not only doing that. We are also looking at how to strengthen our supply chains. We are investing in companies that are in the business of food manufacturing. We are investing in greenhouses so we can have more food in our country—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk.

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HOUSING

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one little-known aspect of the housing crisis is that it is having a direct impact on the birth rate.

An article published today in *La Presse* clearly documents the unfortunate situation of couples who are putting off having kids until they can purchase a home. Louis-Philippe Beaulieu explained the situation clearly, saying he did not want his kids to have any less than he himself had received. That is exactly what the Canadian dream is all about, but unfortunately, it was shattered 10 years ago when this Liberal government came to power.

Why will the government not adopt our proposal to eliminate the GST on new construction?

Pauline Rochefort (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently met with people from real estate boards in northern Ontario. They talked about the need for affordable housing and supportive housing. They want us to pass the Build Canada Homes legislation and the budget implementation legislation as soon as possible.

I encourage my colleagues to vote with us.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that these people have been in government for 10 years and the public has spent 10 years being disappointed in the government's action or inaction on housing. What is coming down the pike does not look any better.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation predicts an 18% decline in housing starts. It is time to grab the bull by the horns. It is essential to come up with something positive for the public.

Why not adopt our proposal to abolish the GST on new construction?

This will have a direct impact on Canadian buyers.

Madeleine Chenette (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and to the Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree that it is important to have affordable homes and housing.

We are at 100 days of Build Canada Homes and it is producing results: We have an agreement with the provinces, including Quebec, to take action; six construction projects on federal property; and thousands of new housing units, 7,500 to be precise, including in Longueuil, Quebec, in Nova Scotia and in Ontario.

The budget has to be adopted so that we can have affordable housing.

* * *

PENSIONS

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all week long I have been asking questions about the Cûram system, a financial disaster that was supposed to cost \$1.6 billion but ended up costing \$6.6 billion and leaving 86,000 seniors waiting for their money.

The answer that I was repeatedly given was to provide the names of the people concerned. Seriously, is this what passes for Liberal leadership? I am going to give the minister one last chance to come up with an answer that does not involve asking for names. If she tells me once again that she wants us to submit names, it will simply prove the Liberals' incompetence.

How will the member show leadership, I wonder?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is the most extensive digital transformation ever. The vast majority of seniors are registered in the system and are receiving their benefits promptly and correctly. We have contacted MPs' offices to ask for the names of the Canadians concerned, and we have also offered to brief MPs on the system.

Our government continues to support seniors in a variety of ways, including through dental care and the new grocery benefit.

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honestly at a loss for words. I am sorry but the Liberals have really just proven that they are incompetent.

They just proved that they have no respect for seniors. They just proved that they have no respect for the Canadians who paid \$5 billion too much. They just proved that, basically, the Liberals are the elite and that they do not care about ordinary Canadians. I will continue to fight.

I do not have a question. This is incompetence. Unless the minister can show me that she has put a crisis task force in place to deal with this issue, then she can remain seated.

• (1155)

Leslie Church (Toronto—St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the department has been working to modernize a decades-old system to

Oral Questions

be able to process claims more effectively in the decades to come. Right now, 7.7 million seniors are receiving their benefits on time, and the department is working urgently to deal with any cases where there has been a delay.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Giovanna Mingarelli (Prescott—Russell—Cumberland, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have good news.

Following almost unprecedented levels of collaboration, Bill C-19 has received royal assent. As a result, over 12 million Canadians will now receive vital support to help pay for groceries and other essentials.

Canadians are expecting us to, once again, put partisanship aside and pass the budget implementation act. Can the parliamentary secretary update the House on how swift passage of the BIA would help unlock generational investments and build the strongest economy in the G7?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the short time the member has served as an MP, she has made an outstanding contribution, particularly regarding economic issues. She is, after all, a tech entrepreneur at not one but two companies. She understands the importance of putting in place a foundation for the Canadian economy.

Bill C-19 did receive royal assent, and 12 million Canadians will benefit.

We can go a step further and put in place a foundation for the future of this country. That is, of course, the budget. I have had the opportunity to serve, for a few meetings now, on the federal finance committee. We are working well there. I hope the Conservatives will work with us to pass the budget without obstruction. I know they are up to it, and I know the country needs that right now.

* * *

INDUSTRY

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, at the finance committee, the president of the Canada Infrastructure Bank stated that none of the funds loaned to electric bus makers were written off. Despite the bankruptcy of Lion Electric, which had at least \$470 million allocated to it, the strategic innovation fund also committed \$50 million to Lion. That is a writeoff. Export Development will not disclose how much it lost. Lion Electric was always a funding scheme that enabled insiders to profit from the government's transition narrative.

Will the responsible minister provide some transparency and show taxpayers how much this scam has cost them?

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague opposite, who is a constructive member on these questions.

Oral Questions

Obviously, the situation he refers to with this particular company has its issues, but we know, more generally, that investments in renewable technology work. We know the future direction of both heavy vehicles and light vehicles is increasingly electric. That is why we are making the investments we are making.

In terms of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, I will refer those questions to the bank.

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how much proof they need in order to see that this is actually not working—that money is going off the table and nothing is being accomplished.

The president of Lion Electric, Marc Bédard, sold \$33 million of his shares prior to its bankruptcy. In what is known as a “pump and dump” stock play, the Liberal government acted as the pump for millions of taxpayer dollars. Mr. Bédard and his friends then orchestrated the dump, and they walked away with millions of dollars. The former minister did not include a share lock-up with the grants. This is at least gross incompetence. It is a financial crime, the victims of which are Canadian taxpayers.

Will any minister finally do the right thing and call in the RCMP?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was at the federal finance committee yesterday with the hon. member. He knows how the answer was put forward by Mr. Cory of the Infrastructure Bank.

There is no deal with Lion Electric. What happened with Lion in terms of the bankruptcy obviously is regrettable, certainly, but the buses that were intended to be procured are on the road under the operation of another company. The company was in fact sold.

When it comes to the Infrastructure Bank, the founding act of the bank makes this clear: Audits are required. The member can look at those audits. The Auditor General is required to look at the Infrastructure Bank. Committee meetings can happen.

The answers were clear.

LABOUR

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is rampant use of illegal workers on federally funded infrastructure projects in Alberta. These trafficked workers are being abused, robbed and forced into unsafe work conditions, while union trades are shut out of the very jobs their taxes are funding. Over a year ago, I presented evidence to the government of this corruption, yet there has been no action. We tried to start a study in committee on the issue, but the Liberals blocked it.

Why are the Liberals siding with corrupt companies that are using illegal, trafficked workers, instead of standing with Alberta's building trades?

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have lots of respect for all the individuals who are out there building important infrastructure in Canada. We expect all employers to follow the

rules to ensure that Canadians are safe day in and day out. We will continue to work forward so we can make sure that happens.

• (1200)

JUSTICE

Eric St-Pierre (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also have good news today. Bill C-14, the bail and sentencing reform act, after months of Conservative obstruction, is finally making its way through. Premiers, mayors and law enforcement from across the country have called on Parliament to quickly pass the bill so it could soon become the law of the land.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice please share with Canadians the progress made on the bail and sentencing reform act?

Patricia Lattanzio (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our new Liberal Prime Minister was given a clear mandate by Canadians to tighten bail, strengthen sentences and keep repeat violent offenders in jail, where they belong. After months and months of obstruction by the Conservatives at committee, holding Bill C-14 hostage and running down the clock by talking about cats and dogs, they finally relented last week and allowed the bill to move forward.

Today, as the bill reaches its final stage at third reading, I urge the Conservatives to support this important piece of legislation that would help keep our communities safe.

[Translation]

SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Bernard Généreux (Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the college and community innovation program supports research centres like Solutions Novika, Biopterre and Optech in La Pocatière. These centres support entrepreneurs' efforts to innovate and create jobs in the regions. However, the government is set to cut 30% of their budget.

Meanwhile, it is throwing more than \$6 billion at the the Cúram fiasco and continues to spend billions of dollars on consultations, with fiscal management that always leaves Canadians with more debt and fewer results. It is quite simply outrageous.

Why are the Liberals cutting research and innovation instead of cutting spending?

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that colleges conduct very important research and that their relationships with businesses are very important, since the intellectual property rights to the research conducted by colleges belong to businesses.

People have been advocating for the program, and we are having productive conversations about it with the people from the colleges.

* * *

[English]

PHARMACARE

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says he is committed to pharmacare, but today only three provinces and one territory are covered. That is about 17% of all Canadians. A commitment to pharmacare should mean access for Canadians no matter where they live. Right now, access to medicine depends on one's postal code. It is not nation building when we give only certain provinces and territories access to medicine.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to expanding pharmacare to every province and territory that wants in so Canadians are not treated differently based on where they live?

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member works really hard for his community, and I appreciate the collaboration on this very matter.

Our government will always protect Canada's health care system, including pharmacare and dental care. These are clear commitments, and we will always keep them. We are continuing to work with all provinces and territories to see how we can best support them to strengthen the health care system, including pharmacare.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the first nations caring society created Have a Heart Day. I attended an event held at the Meridian Theatres at Centrepointe. There were about 15 schools with around 700 students at this beautiful event. Originally started in 2012, this campaign has students write letters to the Prime Minister regarding injustices towards indigenous peoples.

Will the Prime Minister honour these calls and finally act to give equity to indigenous peoples in Canada?

Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her passion for this issue.

It is absolutely clear that we must continue to do everything we can to eliminate discrimination in Canada. That is why our ministers are meeting with stakeholders and with partners. They are ensuring that they get this right. We will continue to be focused on ensuring reconciliation moving forward.

I look forward to talking with the member opposite and explaining what the minister is doing over the next few weeks.

Oral Questions

PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-15

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-15, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, be disposed of as follows:

(a) it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Finance that, during its consideration of the bill:

(i) the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings,

(ii) all amendments for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill be submitted to the clerk of the committee in both official languages no later than noon on Thursday, February 19, 2026,

(iii) the clerk of the committee write immediately to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee and any independent members to inform them of the study of the bill by the committee and to invite them to prepare and submit any proposed amendments to the bill, and that these amendments shall be deemed proposed during clause-by-clause consideration of the bill,

(iv) the Chair of the committee write as promptly as possible to the chairs of the standing committees who have chosen to consider the subject matter of the provisions in the bill to inform them that any recommendations or suggested amendments be sent to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance no later than noon Thursday, February 19, 2026,

(v) the committee proceed to clause-by-clause consideration of the bill no later than Monday, February 23, 2026 at 11:00 a.m.,

(vi) if the committee has not completed the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, February 23, 2026, all remaining amendments submitted to the committee shall be deemed moved, the Chair shall put the question, forthwith and successively, without further debate on all remaining clauses and proposed amendments as well as each and every question necessary to dispose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill,

(vii) the Chair shall report the bill to the House no later than Wednesday February 25, 2026;

(b) the bill may be taken up at report stage at the next sitting following the completion of the provisions of subparagraph (a)(vii) of this order; and

(c) the motion for third reading of the bill may be made in the same sitting during which the said bill has been concurred in at report stage.

• (1205)

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

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and to the Secretary of State (International Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and in accordance with the enhanced transparency requirements set out in the amended policy on tabling of treaties in Parliament, I am pleased to present to the House of Commons the Government of Canada's objectives for three negotiations, including a Canada-United Arab Emirates comprehensive economic partnership agreement, a Canada-India comprehensive economic partnership agreement, and a Canada-Thailand free trade agreement.

The Government of Canada intends to commence these negotiations as soon as practicable, but in accordance with the policy, the commencement of negotiations will take place no earlier than 30 days from today.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, entitled "Certificate of Nomination of Kelly Burke to the Position of Commissioner of Official Languages".

The committee recommends the nominee for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 5—SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, Government Business number 5, standing on the Notice Paper in the name of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, be deemed adopted.

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

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for consent to adopt the following motion: that, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, during consideration of Bill C-14 today, the motion for third reading of the bill may be

made in the same sitting following the concurrence at report stage of the said bill, and, should third reading of the bill take place on Friday, February 13, 2026, that Government Orders be extended for an hour on that day.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

* * *

● (1210)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 56.1, I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, during consideration of Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the National Defence Act (bail and sentencing), today, the motion for third reading of the bill may be made in the same sitting following the concurrence at report stage of the said bill, and, should third reading of the bill take place on Friday, February 13, 2026, Government Orders be extended for an hour on that day.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Would those members participating in person who object to the motion, please rise in their places.

And fewer than 25 members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Fewer than 25 members having risen, the motion is adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by Canadians. The petitioners note that the budget implementation act would grant cabinet ministers sweeping powers to secretly exempt companies or individuals from federal laws, powers that were never disclosed or contemplated in the budget itself.

Accordingly, the petitioners call on the government to remove these provisions and restore Canada's long-standing financial standards, transparency and fiscal integrity.

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today on behalf of Canadians concerned with two serious measures that the Liberals have brought forward. The first is the power in the budget implementation act to secretly exempt individuals or companies from any federal law, which was never disclosed in the budget discussion. The second is to adjust how Canada budgets for itself, moving away from our long-standing fiscal traditions.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the government to do two things: first, remove any provision that allows cabinet ministers to exempt companies or individuals from federal law, and second, to restore our long-standing financial standards, our transparency and our fiscal integrity.

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from constituents from Edmonton West and across the country regarding the government's provisions in Bill C-15 that would grant individual cabinet ministers sweeping powers to secretly exempt companies or individuals from federal laws. If anyone saw the operations committee the other day with the performance of the President of the Treasury Board, they would see why we cannot give such sweeping powers to ministers.

The signatories ask that the government immediately remove any provisions that allow cabinet ministers to exempt companies or individuals from federal laws.

SHORE POWER INFRASTRUCTURE

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a certified petition on behalf of residents from Port Alberni on Vancouver Island who are calling on the federal government to fund more shore power at the Port Alberni loading docks.

The petitioners describe living with the relentless noise and air pollution caused by ships running diesel generators while they are berthed, sometimes continuously day and night for weeks at a time. They say this is not a minor inconvenience. It affects sleep, health and quality of life for families living near the port. They cite that shore power is a proven solution. It allows ships to plug into the local electrical grid, eliminating the need for diesel generation while berthed. The petitioners also point out that shore power reduces emissions, lowers noise pollution, delivers long-term fuel savings and is already in place in ports around the world, including the port of Vancouver.

These petitioners are calling on the federal government to prioritize community health and environmental protection by funding shore power infrastructure at the Port Alberni loading docks.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table petitions from Canadians who are deeply concerned by the sweeping powers contained within Bill C-15.

The petitioners warn that this provision would allow ministers to exempt any individual or corporation from any federal law, except for the Criminal Code, without full public or parliamentary scrutiny. They believe it undermines the foundational principle of our democracy, which is that laws are made, amended and set aside by Parliament, not by unilateral executive decision. These Canadians support innovation and economic growth, but they are clear that flexibility must never come at the expense of transparency, accountability and the rule of law.

The petitioners, therefore, call on the Government of Canada to remove or significantly limit these sweeping powers to ensure proper parliamentary oversight to guarantee that no authority is placed above the law. I am honoured to present these petitions on their behalf.

Routine Proceedings

• (1215)

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present a petition that raises important concerns of Canadians about amendments made by the Liberal government and supported by the Bloc to Bill C-9. Petitioners fear that the change could criminalize passages of the Bible and other sacred writings. They believe that the state should not interfere in religious teachings or scriptures and that doing so risks government overreach into matters of faith. At the core of this petition is a call to protect freedom of religion and freedom of expression as fundamental rights in Canada. They urge the government to ensure that Canadians can continue to read, to share and to practice their faith without fear of being criminally charged.

BRAIN CANCER

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition. The petitioners note that brain cancer research is critically underfunded in Canada and that Canada is years behind the United States in approving new drugs and treatments. Accordingly, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to increase funding for brain cancer research; work with the provinces and territories to ensure that drugs, medical devices and new therapies are accessible to brain cancer patients nationwide; and to remove unnecessary red tape so brain cancer drugs can be approved expeditiously.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition that I would like to table on behalf of Canadians who are concerned about Bill C-15 and the powers contained in that bill that would give the government the power to override any of its laws, other than the Criminal Code, at the discretion of a minister. The petitioners think that this is an unreasonable overreach of government power that could exempt an individual or a company from any law, including the Conflict of Interest Act. The petitioners are concerned about this, and I am happy to table their petition.

Government Orders

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise on behalf of the people of Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry to table a petition on behalf of residents of all faiths who have reached out with concerns and signed this petition about Bill C-9, specifically the attempts by the Liberals and the Bloc to ban religious teachings or texts of faith communities. They, too, believe that hate speech is wrong and should not be tolerated, but believe the Liberal government's efforts are misguided. I have heard from Christians, Muslims and other religious organizations, and I appreciate that they have reached out with their concerns. They state the government has no place in the religious teachings or texts of faith communities, and I hear this in the community at large too.

Preserving the right to free speech means defending it when others are threatened with losing that freedom. The petitioners call on the House to protect religious freedom and the right to access, read and share religious texts, and to limit government overreach in matters of faith. It should not be up to the government of the day to freely decide what beliefs are appropriate. I am glad to table this in the House of Commons today.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BAIL AND SENTENCING REFORM ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the National Defence Act (bail and sentencing), as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first opportunity to rise in the aftermath of the terrible murders at Tumbler Ridge, I want to add my voice to the chorus of sorrows. As a father, and like every other parent, I am sure all we could do as we watched that news was to hug our own children a little closer and offer our prayers to the victims' families and the entire community with regard to the devastating impacts they will face in the years ahead.

To the issue at hand, Canadians understand something that is too often lost in our political debate: When the justice system gets something wrong, the government just simply moves on, but ordinary people and their families continue to live with those conse-

quences. That is why Canadians expect Parliament, when shaping the law, to keep those people front and centre.

Let me begin with something important. Conservatives did not come to this bill looking for a fight; we came looking for fixes. We listened to victims and their families. One of the most powerful moments at the justice committee did not come from legal experts. It came from a mother.

Meechelle Best, alongside her husband Ron, spoke about her daughter, Kellie Verwey, a 28-year-old woman from Portage la Prairie, a bright light in our community. Her life was taken by an offender who was out on bail and already in breach of his conditions.

Meechelle did not come to Ottawa looking for sympathy. She came looking for answers and with solutions. When Meechelle described the day she lost her daughter, the room fell rightfully silent. In that room, it became clear to everyone that this was not some theoretical debate. It was a mother reminding us that decisions have been made in this place that are lived out in our communities by real people.

Meechelle asked a question that should stay with all of us: What good are reassurances if they do not protect anyone? She spoke about how often we hear about the rights of the accused and asked simply and powerfully about the rights of victims and their families. The cost of failure in the bail system is not measured in reports and statistics. It is measured in lives lost, in families living with grief and in communities left wondering whether tragedy could have been prevented.

At committee, Conservative MPs did not just talk about the problems. We listened and we proposed solutions. Police officers, prosecutors, transit workers and community advocates told us that the justice system was broken, with too many dangerous repeat offenders cycling through. When they pointed out the gaps, we worked to make this bill stronger.

Canadians are exhausted by this revolving door justice system and are just as tired of endless political games. They want results, and rightfully so, and we made real improvements that would restore integrity to the bail system through amendments. One key amendment that we put forward would prevent convicted serious offenders from acting as sureties.

Bail supervision is meant to protect the public, not serve as simply a rubber stamp. Allowing those with serious criminal records to act as sureties is ridiculous, and our amendment would end this absurdity once and for all. We would also strengthen detention rules by establishing a reverse onus for repeat serious violent offenders who commit new crimes while already on release. If someone is given a second chance and they use it to hurt people again, the priority must be public safety. They need to prove they are no longer a risk or they will remain behind bars.

Public safety is not negotiable, period. For too long, debates about bail reform have been driven by partial information. It was not that long ago that we saw Liberal MPs and ministers defending the status quo as if it were not broken and everything was okay, but the warning signs were there. However, it took tragedy after tragedy before the Liberals were prepared to admit that they had actually broken the system and that it needed to be fixed.

To ensure this never happens again and to hold government accountable, our amendment would mandate annual reporting on the bail system performance with transparent data on reoffending and compliance. Simply put, Canadians deserve to know whether these changes are making them safer, and Parliament needs facts, not assumptions, to keep improving the system.

Finally, we supported measures that treat serious firearms and weapons offences as violent crimes under youth justice law, because gun crime is violent crime, full stop. A person's age does not lessen the trauma inflicted on victims or the fear that it spreads in our communities. These are not just minor tweaks. They are important changes that would make the bill stronger.

Canadians also deserve honesty about what did not happen at committee.

- (1220)

While Conservatives worked to strengthen the legislation, the Liberals repeatedly voted against measures that would have gone further to protect victims and communities. They voted against requiring consecutive sentences for repeat human traffickers. Let us be clear about what this means. Human trafficking is one of the most heinous, exploitative and devastating crimes that exist in the Criminal Code. When someone commits that offence repeatedly, we believe, the penalty should reflect the gravity and the repetitive nature of that harm, yet the Liberals rejected this proposal, choosing leniency where stronger consequences were absolutely warranted.

They voted against making public safety the primary consideration of bail decisions. Members should think about that. What else could there be other than public safety as the primary consideration of bail decisions? At a time when we have communities across the country raising concerns about repeat violent offenders cycling through the system, the Liberals refused to enshrine a clear statement that community comes first.

They also voted against mandatory detention in cases involving repeat serious offenders who reoffend while already on release. They voted against strengthening passport surrender requirements for high-risk accused individuals even in reverse onus situations. They voted against expanding ineligibility for house arrest for seri-

Government Orders

ous offences such as human trafficking, robbery and weapons trafficking. This leaves open the possibility that individuals convicted of major crimes could still serve their sentences in the comfort of their own home.

Canadians watching this debate understand the difference. Conservatives fought for stronger protections because we know what happens when warnings are ignored, while the Liberals chose half measures.

This debate does not exist in a vacuum. Across the country, police chiefs and premiers have raised concerns about repeat offenders committing serious crimes while out on bail. Victims' families have spoken about preventable tragedies. Frontline police officers have called on Parliament to act before more people are hurt or killed.

Bill C-14, as amended, moves in the right direction in several respects because of Conservative amendments, but it still reflects the government's failure to confront the consequences of policy choices that weakened confidence in the justice system. Public safety should not be a partisan issue. We should all agree that criminals belong behind bars. That means recognizing when the system needs correction.

I believe in a justice system that must hold two truths at once. It must protect the rights of the accused, and it must protect the innocent. It must respect fairness, and it must ensure safety for the communities that we all serve. These goals are not mutually exclusive. In fact, public confidence in the justice system depends on achieving both. When repeat violent offenders are released too easily, confidence erodes, and rightfully so. When serious crimes are met with insufficient consequences, deterrence weakens. When victims feel that their safety ranks second to ideology, trust simply disappears. That is why Conservatives pushed for stronger measures. That is why we will continue to push for improvements wherever and whenever possible.

Government Orders

The amendments demonstrate what can happen when the government actually listens. Transit workers can be better protected. Bail supervision can be more credible. Repeat violent offenders can face stronger scrutiny. Canadians can finally receive clear reporting on how the bail system is performing. These are real improvements, but we must acknowledge that more work remains. I will never stop working to correct the past mistakes and to ensure that repeat offenders face real consequences for the harm they cause to folks not just in my area but across the country.

Bill C-14 is stronger today because Conservative members fought to make it stronger, including the tireless work of my colleague from Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations. Canadians should also know this: Where the government chose to not go further on repeat human traffickers, on mandatory detention for serious repeat offenders and on ending house arrest for major crimes, Conservatives will continue to press for change.

This work does not just end with one bill. At the end of the day, the first responsibility of any government is the safety of its citizens. That responsibility does not change with political convenience, and it does not disappear when this specific debate ends. It is the obligation of any government to keep its citizens safe. That is a responsibility that Conservatives will never stop fighting to uphold.

• (1225)

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned consecutive sentencing. One thing that is completely missing from the bill is consecutive sentencing for murderers who have committed multiple murders. In fact, the Liberals have refused to take any action in the face of the Bissonnette decision, which struck down a reasonable law that gave judges the discretion to apply parole ineligibility periods on a consecutive basis to take into account each life lost.

Not only that, but the Liberals appear to oppose Brian's bill, named in memory of the late Brian Ilesic, which was introduced by my colleague, the member for Edmonton Griesbach, so convicted murderers would not be able to apply for parole year after year once they have served their minimum sentence.

What does that say about the government's approach when it comes to holding the most serious offenders, convicted murderers, accountable for their crimes?

• (1230)

Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, this is why we repeatedly say the Liberals are soft on crime. We have seen from them, for so many years, this deference to the accused and the convicted instead of their listening to victims.

When we get a chance to talk to somebody who went through, in particular, the parole process, or any of the court processes, we hear their stories and their frustration with the lack of information available about releases on specific days and the inability to actually put forward victim impact statements. It is devastating to listen to.

At the end of the day, it is Parliament that should reign supreme. When there are judges who make decisions that do not make sense, when we talk to our constituents about the fact that they do not make sense, we should be able to overrule and decide that serious,

repeat murderers deserve consecutive sentences and should stay behind bars for life, because life should mean life.

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned in his speech the delays that happened at committee, and I hope he can elaborate a little more, because the Conservatives have constantly been trying to get Canadians to somehow believe that the government would table legislation and then obstruct our own legislation. It absolutely makes no sense whatsoever.

Bill C-9 first went to the justice committee. Therefore, it was under consideration. Bill C-14 came after, and because of the filibuster on Bill C-9, that delayed C-14. Is that not correct?

Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, not to get too far into the weeds, but the committee is the master of its own domain. The committee members could have decided that Bill C-14 was the priority.

Canadians decided that Bill C-14 was the priority. They have been demanding bail reform for eight years, since the initial changes by the former, well the same, Liberal government that caused this entire mess. The Liberals decided to put a divisive issue, the removal of the protections that are inherent to religious expression in Bill C-9, forward instead of bail reform.

Liberals should stop politicizing it, but I am glad we have finally been able to move forward. They should also drop Bill C-9 while they are at it.

Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I agree with the member in that amendments were needed, and they continue to be needed. I wonder if he can express whether the Conservatives will support the amendments that were tabled by the MP for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, no, we have been focusing on strengthening the bill, not weakening the bill, which is why Conservatives put forward so many positive amendments. Thankfully, some that were entertained are now going to become law, should this bill pass through the Senate, but we are going to leave aside bills that would put the priority of convicted criminals above that of victims.

Hon. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, is it true? Did we just hear the member say that Bill C-9 is unnecessary? That is our hate crime legislation. Worshippers in Canada today have felt intimidated and threatened going to their place of worship. We are trying to protect Canadians from that threat, that fear for their lives.

The Jewish community has been asking for this bill for a long time, and it seems like the member does not care.

Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I have received more emails, phone calls, and stops in the grocery store than I ever have on any other issue about the amendments to remove the freedom of religious expression, which the Liberals cooked up with the Bloc Québécois. That is the problem.

Of course, acts of hate are the problem. We should have a country where our prosecutors and police act on the laws that we have to protect worshippers of all faiths and all Canadians. It has only been during the last 10 years that we have seen this rapid rise in every type of crime, including hate crime, under the Liberal government.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The question is on Motion No. 2. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 3 to 9.

[*Translation*]

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

• (1235)

[*English*]

I would like to make a brief statement for the benefit of all members.

The member in whose name the report stage motion is standing is not in a position to indicate that it should be adopted. No other members have indicated that it should be either adopted or negatived.

Our own practice is silent as to what to do in such a situation. However, the issue has come up in the British House of Commons. Erskine May, 25th edition, in paragraph 20.60, states the following: “When, on the question being put, no Member has said either ‘aye’ or ‘no’, the Deputy Speaker has declared the question negatived”.

[*Translation*]

Since the House is in a similar situation today, I will follow this precedent and declare the motions negatived.

I thank all members for their attention in this regard.

Hon. Ruby Sahota (for the Minister of Justice) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

[*English*]

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

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would request it be carried it on division.

(Motion agreed to)

Points of Order

Hon. Ruby Sahota (for the Minister of Justice) moved that Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the National Defence Act (bail and sentencing) be read a third time and passed.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN BILL C-2 AND BILL C-12

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to contribute to the point of order raised by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands concerning the continued placement of Bill C-2, the so-called strong borders act, on the Order Paper.

As you and the whole House well know, Bill C-2 was a significant overreach.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Order.

I invite the member to make his intervention, and then we will carry on after.

Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, although the business of the House will continue in a mere moment's time, the whole House knows that Bill C-2 was a significant overreach. If passed in its current form, Bill C-2 would require law-abiding Canadians to lose important liberties to pay for the Liberals' failures on borders and immigration.

The government, realizing the passage of Bill C-2 would be neither swift nor assured, went back to the drawing board and repackaged the less contentious aspects into new legislation, Bill C-12, the Bill C-2 redo. However, the government has since publicly indicated that the orphaned portions of Bill C-2 not only remain Liberal policy but also continue to be part of its parliamentary agenda, as is.

I share the member's view that Bill C-2, in its current form, cannot proceed further in the House by virtue of the same question rule. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, fourth edition, explains this practice at paragraphs 12.89 and 12.90:

A decision once made cannot be questioned again but must stand as the judgment of the House. Thus, if a bill or motion is rejected or adopted, it cannot be revived in the same session.... This is to prevent the time of the House being used in the discussion of motions of the same nature, with the possibility of contradictory decisions being arrived at in the course of the same session.

This rule is dependent upon the principle which forbids the same question from being decided in the House twice within the same session. Although two similar or identical motions or bills may appear in the Notice Paper, only one motion or one bill may be proceeded with. Thus, if a decision is taken by the House on the first bill, for example, to defeat the bill or advance it through a stage in the legislative process, then the other similar or identical bill may not be proceeded with.

In the present case, Bill C-12 would be what is described as the “first bill” in Janse and LeBlanc's explanation, because it had been adopted at second reading back on October 23, 2025, while Bill C-2 would be the “other bill” described in that passage and therefore cannot now proceed.

Government Orders

Bill C-12 and Bill C-2 are, in my view, very similar in substance. Indeed, Bill C-12 is effectively a copy and paste of 11 of the 16 parts of Bill C-2, plus one of its two schedules, as the member enumerated in her argument.

Setting aside the marketing-oriented short titles of the two bills, Bill C-12 is composed of 136 of the 197 clauses found in Bill C-2, or 69% of its clauses, adjusted only insofar as necessary to reflect the passage of time between the introduction of the two bills. As such, if the House is called upon to vote on Bill C-2, it would be called upon to vote again for second reading of many legislative measures it has already approved, but it might yield a different result.

The Chair has had multiple opportunities during the previous two Parliaments to rule on these issues, after many Conservative private members' bills have been poached by the government as its own legislation. While we are happy to see a good idea get adopted, often it gets thrown into an omnibus budget implementation bill, or buried, some might say.

I would refer the House, for example, to the following rulings: Mr. Speaker Rota, on February 18, 2021, at page 4256 of the Debates; the Deputy Speaker on May 11, 2022, at page 5123 of the Debates; Mr. Speaker Rota on June 6, 2022, at page 6140 of the Debates; Mr. Speaker Rota on September 20, 2022, at page 7341 of the Debates; the Speaker's immediate predecessor on November 29, 2023, at page 19211 of the Debates, and again on December 12, 2023, at page 19978; and finally, the then Deputy Speaker on June 7, 2024, at page 24627 of the Debates.

In the May 2022 ruling, the Chair held that Bill C-250, the private member's bill proposed by our colleague, the hon. member for Saskatoon South, could not be debated and would be rendered "pending" following the second reading of Bill C-19, a budget implementation bill that contained clauses similar to my friend's bill because:

The House should not face a situation where the same question can be decided twice within the same session, unless the House's intention is to rescind or revoke the decision.

● (1240)

In June 2024, the Chair again fashioned a similar procedure, which would have seen the vote at third reading of another private member's bill, Bill C-323, held in abeyance, if necessary, until the budget implementation bill, Bill C-59, had completed its course through Parliament.

This approach to placing pieces of legislation on hold after a similar bill has made progress is not a brand new practice. I would refer you, Mr. Speaker, to the ruling of Mr. Speaker Michener, who said on March 13, 1959, at page 238 of the Journals, in another situation concerning nearly identical pieces of legislation:

...the House is not going to occupy itself on two separate occasions under two separate headings with exactly the same business. That would not be reasonable, and I can find no support or authority for following such a course. Thus I have come to the conclusion that this bill must stand, as well as the other bill in the same terms, or at least in terms for exactly the same purpose, until the bill which was first moved has been disposed of either by being withdrawn, which would open the door for one of these other bills to proceed, or by way of being approved, which would automatically dispose of these bills because the House would not vote twice on the same subject matter any more than it would debate the same subject matter twice.

To sum up one of my most brief points of order ever, 69% of the content of Bill C-2 is replicated in Bill C-12, making the two bills substantively similar. The House has since passed Bill C-12 at third reading, in another example of the wonderful collaboration that is found in this place, and it is working its way through the procedures of the other place.

Because the two bills are substantively similar, the same question rule precludes the House from voting on the same matter twice, and therefore, Bill C-2 must be placed in abeyance while Bill C-12 remains before Parliament. If Bill C-12 receives royal assent, Bill C-2 then must be discharged and dropped from the Order Paper.

I note that all of the records were from nearly the last 100 years, again a departure from my usual practice in raising the precedents that guide the decisions of the Chair.

● (1245)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I thank the hon. member for his intervention, and certainly the matter will be taken under the consideration of the Chair.

* * *

BAIL AND SENTENCING REFORM ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the National Defence Act (bail and sentencing), be read the third time and passed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Resuming debate.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

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

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

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to call at 1:30 p.m. so we could begin Private Members' Business.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CLEAN COASTS ACT

The House resumed from November 6, 2025, consideration of the motion that Bill C-244, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 and the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since this is the first time I have had the opportunity to speak in the House today, and since it is the last time before the big day tomorrow, February 14, I would like to take a moment to talk about Valentine's Day.

I think it is an important day for many people. Obviously, it is very important to me. I would like to take this opportunity to send my love to my partner, to whom I am deeply devoted, as well as to my children, Ulysse, Malbaie and Marcéline. I would also like to wish a happy Valentine's Day to everyone in the House and to all my friends and acquaintances. I might add that today is one of the few days when the colour red does not annoy me, so people here might want to take note. Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to declare my love for my nation, my country: Quebec. I doubt my partner will consider that cheating.

Today, we are discussing Bill C-244, which was introduced by the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country in British Columbia. This member is also the chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, so I would imagine that his role in committee may have led him to take an interest in the subject of his bill. Judging from the name of his B.C. riding, I also assume that he lives near the water.

Bill C-244 deals with the issue of derelict vessels in our waters. It should be noted that this issue has been addressed under the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act since 2019. Bill C-244 seeks to amend that act, which essentially states that Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Department of Transport are responsible for implementing a framework for dealing with abandoned vessels. The act also gives the Coast Guard the mandate to keep an inventory of these problematic and dangerous vessels, which are scattered throughout the country.

I would say that at first glance, this bill appears to be in the public interest. Its main provision is contained in clause 3. In fact, clause 3 basically sums up this bill, which aims to amend the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act by adding section 34.1, concerning transfer of ownership, after section 34. This is what the new section 34.1 would say:

It is prohibited for an owner of a vessel to transfer ownership of it to a person, if the owner knows that — or is reckless as to whether — the person lacks the ability, resources or intent to maintain, operate or dispose of the vessel in a manner that prevents it from becoming wrecked, abandoned or hazardous.

Responsibility is therefore assigned to an individual or organization during a transfer of ownership, in order to ensure that the per-

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son to whom the boat is being transferred will take care of it and does not intend to let it become a wreck. In my opinion, this is not a negative thing, quite the contrary. Of course, this may not be enough to solve the problem of wrecked vessels, let us be honest. Nevertheless, I think it is still an initiative that cannot be described as bad. We welcome it.

The Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of Bill C-244 so that it can be examined in committee. We will even try to improve it, if possible, because I think this is an important issue. The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans has examined this issue before and it tabled a report with a whole series of recommendations in the House on October 22. We may be able to draw on that report in committee to further improve the bill before us, since I am assuming that everyone in the House will want to send this bill to committee.

• (1250)

The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans' report highlighted certain issues involving wrecked and abandoned vessels specifically, including vessel ownership identification. Sometimes it is difficult to know who owns and is responsible for a particular wreck. There is also the issue of managing private mooring buoys, because sometimes it is unclear how to deal with them. The approval process for removing a derelict vessel is also slow and bureaucratic. I will have the opportunity to talk about this a little later, because there are some very concrete examples from certain ridings. There is also the obvious issue of cost. Removing wrecks is not free. It costs money.

There is a specific case that brings to mind the issue of costs and red tape. The member for Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon experienced this first-hand in her riding. The *Kathryn Spirit* was beached on the shores of Lake Saint-Louis in Beauharnois from 2011 to 2018. The ship sat there for seven years. This is completely unacceptable. Unfortunately, nobody in authority seemed willing to deal with it.

People often complain that the federal government is not fulfilling its responsibilities. We in the Bloc Québécois believe that respecting jurisdictions is very important. In fact, we sometimes find that the federal government interferes too much in our jurisdictions. Some things do fall under federal jurisdiction, but it seems as though the federal government is not interested in those things and is not taking care of them. In the case of the *Kathryn Spirit*, it is completely unacceptable that a ship has been left there as a wreck for seven years. It also proves that the federal government often does not do its job properly.

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It is not just a matter of political stripe, either, because between 2011 and 2018, there were both Conservative and Liberal governments in power, and that is how long it took for the ship to finally be moved. The people in the region represented by my colleague, the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, were fed up with this situation, and understandably so.

Abandoned vessels can cause all sorts of problems. There is rust in these vessels and possibly contaminants. Children may decide to go and play in the vicinity of these vessels, teenagers or homeless people could get hurt. There are people who will go and explore them out of curiosity, and we can understand that it might be interesting. It may be more the exception than the norm, but in some places, shipwrecks even become tourist attractions and draw curious visitors in regions such as the north shore or elsewhere, where people want to go and see the wrecks. Nevertheless, these wrecks cause significant damage to the environment and the surrounding area.

We are familiar with the well-known zero plastic waste initiative. We know that the oceans are full of plastic, and that it is accumulating. We also know of the challenge inherent in what is called “net zero carbon emissions”. Perhaps we should give some thought to a net zero shipwreck or net zero abandoned vessel initiative, since they also pose a major challenge. No one wants abandoned vessels cluttering our waterways, lakes and rivers. Obviously, without a vision, action rarely follows. Without a coherent vision, it becomes difficult to take coherent action on problems like this.

In coastal areas, fishing boats are extremely useful. People need them to put food on the table, and they generate good economic activity. The same goes for recreational boating, which lets us experience remarkable sights, or for commercial shipping, which carries goods essential to the vitality of our communities and our economy. However, we have to consider what happens when these vessels reach the end of their life cycle, too. This is not an issue to be ignored, on the contrary.

We know that contaminants find their way into our environment, which can harm human health and compromise our constituents' quality of life. We do not want to see what has happened in some places. There are shocking images of plastics piling up in the oceans. We do not want to see vessels piling up in our lakes and rivers, lying all over the place. Ultimately, this prevents us from developing these resources on a long-term basis. However, it is not just a matter of developing resources, but also of protecting ourselves and protecting biodiversity and nature.

In conclusion, it is shocking to see the federal government's frequent lack of action when it comes to these issues. In this context, we are pleased to see that a member is committed to trying to make things happen. We are pleased to be having a discussion on this issue today. Discussions lead to solutions. At the very least, discussions lead to more awareness and allow for action to be taken.

● (1255)

I urge all members to reflect on this issue as parliamentarians to see what else we can do. I am thinking, for example, of the Magdalen Islands, which has developed expertise in recovering old—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I must interrupt the hon. member.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Victoria.

[*English*]

Will Greaves (Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to speak as the member of Parliament for Victoria in support of the clean coasts act, put forward by my colleague, the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

Those of us who live in and represent coastal communities know that the ocean is our lifeline but also our responsibility.

Even before being elected to the House, I heard from people in my community daily about the negative effects of derelict vessels in our waterways. After every storm, we see more and more vessels that have fallen into disrepair and been abandoned by irresponsible owners for others to deal with. These so-called “dead boats” do not just serve as an eyesore for our community; they pose serious safety and environmental risks, often with no one around to be held accountable. There is not one perfect solution to this issue, but I commend my colleague for putting forward Bill C-244, which would take important steps in the right direction.

The bill would target the irresponsible transfer of vessel ownership. In Victoria, I hear of these instances far too often. An owner sells a rotting hull for a dollar, sometimes less, to somebody who they know cannot maintain it, effectively washing their hands of the environmental liability of responsibly disposing of that vessel. By prohibiting the transfer of vessels to those who lack the resources or the intent to actually maintain them, we would help stop the cycle of abandoned and wrecked vessels before they end up on our beaches and in our marinas. We would be demanding accountability at the point of sale, not just when the taxpayer is forced to foot the bill for a clean-up or removal of a derelict vessel, and not simply relying on the goodwill of local organizations and hard-working volunteers.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the often thankless work by organizations in my riding, such as the Cadboro Bay Dead Boats Society, the Royal Victoria Yacht Club, the Veins of Life Watershed Society, and the Dead Boats Disposal Society, as well as others who have given their time and energy to address this issue, often taking on personal costs and liability. I would also like to thank the Canadian Coast Guard's western region and Transport Canada for their role in environmental response but acknowledge that they do not have the capacity or the mandate to single-handedly shoulder this burden.

As always, we also wish to express our thanks and our appreciation to the Lekwungen-speaking peoples of southern—

Private Members' Business

• (1300)

Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, while I find the commentary interesting, I cannot hear it because of constant crackling. I think perhaps the member has an issue with his mic or computer. Perhaps we can move on to the next speaker while he fixes his IT issues.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I will invite the hon. member for Victoria to perhaps move the microphone just slightly out from his face. Hopefully that will solve the issue. Of course, we do need interpretation to function correctly for the House to operate, so we will see if that works.

I will invite the member for Victoria to resume from where he left off, and if there are more challenges, we will address them when they come.

Will Greaves: Mr. Speaker, as always, we also wish to express our thanks and our appreciation to the Lekwungen-speaking peoples of southern Vancouver Island, the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ nations, whose stewardship and care for these lands and waters since time immemorial set a high bar for our communities and our governments to uphold today—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I am getting word that the interpreters cannot interpret due to sound quality.

Will Greaves: I was hearing the interpretation earlier, Mr. Speaker, and I am not seeing any technical issues on this side.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I am going to ask the member to pause for just a second. I am going to consult the table.

We are going to have an IT ambassador reach out to the hon. member for Victoria to hopefully remedy the situation. We will then return to the remainder of the hon. member's intervention, hopefully later in the hour.

Until then we will move on to the next person in the rotation.

The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here to offer my intervention on Bill C-244, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 and the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act.

The bill proposes to strengthen Canada's ability to address abandoned, derelict and hazardous vessels; close the gaps in the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act by expanding liability for owners who cause or allow vessels to become hazards; clarifies that it is illegal not only to dispose of pollutants but also to allow someone else to do so; tightens rules on the transfer of ownership, preventing owners from offloading vessels into vehicles or onto individuals who cannot maintain or safely dispose of them; reduces long-term marine environmental risks, oil leaks, contamination and wrecked debris; protects public, environmental and navigational safety; ensures owners can be held liable where they are reckless in transferring a vessel to an unqualified buyer; and encourages proactive prevention, consistent enforcement and polluter pays principles.

I do have some concerns, though, with the bill as drafted, specifically about the transfer of ownership amendment, because it uses broad and open-ended language in stating, “if the owner knows that — or is reckless as to whether — the person lacks the ability, resources or intent”.

This would create legal uncertainty and potentially unfairly impact individuals accused of reckless vessel ownership transfers. Where my concerns lie is with regard to how a seller could guarantee or truthfully know the purchaser's intent and means. How would DFO and/or the courts deal with the ambiguities, litigation costs and burden of proof issues?

I am hoping that the drafter, the member who has put the bill forward, could maybe provide some clarity with regard to this, even during debate today, or that, should the bill get to committee, this could be addressed with an amendment.

I would note that the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act, enacted in 2019 under the Canada oceans protection plan, is designed to prevent vessel abandonment and hold owners accountable for the environmental and safety risks posed by their vessels. Under that act, it is illegal to abandon a vessel in Canadian waters or on federal property. Owners are responsible for the costs to remove and repair, and for mitigation. The Canadian Coast Guard and Transport Canada have the authority to order owners to take action. If owners fail to comply, the government can intervene and recover those costs.

The act also establishes significant penalties, including fines and potential imprisonment, and supports a national inventory of wrecked, abandoned or hazardous vessels to monitor and manage the issue. Overall, the act does hold the owner responsible for vessel-related hazards. I know I can speak on behalf of Conservatives. We supported the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act in the 42nd Parliament, and we emphasize the belief that individuals should be responsible for their actions and their property.

I want to lay out in my speech why this is so important for my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. In the community of Stokes Bay, I have been dealing with this issue for a couple of years now. We have had a fishing vessel sink at a government dock. Unfortunately, it released diesel and pollutants into the harbour. The Coast Guard deployed containment booms and conducted a helicopter overflight to monitor the spill.

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The vessel was seen afloat on September 14. The contaminants were contained with provincial assistance. Despite the federal response, the vessel was then refloated but, again, left at the dock. That same vessel sank again in the same location a couple months later. The Coast Guard was again deployed with environmental response equipment. The vessel was refloated, towed to Southampton, just outside my riding, and dry docked, but the recovery had to remove approximately 25,000 litres of pollutants from the water.

The Ontario Provincial Police reported no evidence of criminal activity related to the sinking. However, community frustration increased due to the inaction between the first sinking and the second sinking.

Even more recently, in March 2025, at another location in Howdenvale, a fishing boat was reported sinking at, again, a federal government dock, releasing diesel fuel into the water. Local residents indicated the vessel had been neglected for many years by its owner. Fortunately, the diesel pollution was contained through a joint effort by the boat owner, the Canadian Coast Guard, and the Nawash, one of the first nations in my riding, fisheries assessment program team. The vessel was then pulled ashore, ending the immediate environmental risk.

● (1305)

Again, this incident demonstrates that hazardous or neglected vessels are not isolated to just one area in my community, and that similar issues are unfortunately occurring across multiple federally operated docks in my riding. Here is the challenge for the constituents and what the community is reporting. They stated that they reported the second sinking in real time with photos. They asked why the vessel was allowed to remain after the first sinking and questioned the lack of clear accountability. A local business owner emphasized that the community's sheltered, marked harbour is having trouble now being used by transient boaters seeking refuge during storms, when these vessels are left at the docks.

Historically, this harbour, in particular in Stokes Bay, has a shared responsibility between the indigenous commercial fishers and recreational boaters. However, multiple fishing tugs have now been occupying the dock, three unmoved for years, which again limit access for everybody. This dock congestion has been described as an eyesore, which harms tourism, recreation and businesses in the local community. Basically, here is what the residents are saying: "Someone needs to do something. This cannot keep happening." Many noted that this vessel, which has fortunately been removed, had even sunk five years previous to the incident in 2024, so this has been an ongoing concern.

In summary then of the local impacts, cottage bookings ended up being cancelled; tourism declined; boaters and swimmers avoided the federally operated harbours after the contamination; local businesses, guides and operators lost income during peak season; wildlife and nearshore habitat concerns increased; municipal staff were forced to take on responsibilities despite this being a federal jurisdiction; and there was widespread communication frustration over these unclear federal responsibilities. The most common question I get is this: Who is responsible and why was it not removed after the first spill?

It is impacting transient boating traffic and marine tourism and creating lost revenue for local small businesses and operators, with long-term risks to property values, insurability and economic reputations. There is heightened anxiety over water safety and environmental contamination, and tension has also increased due to the limited dock access. The residents feel that they have no federal mechanisms available to trigger these vessel removals. There is overlap that creates confusion between the Coast Guard, Transport Canada and DFO, and residents really feel that the federal response is reactive instead of proactive, allowing this environmental harm to repeat.

In conclusion, I just want to offer that Bill C-244's goal of reducing barriers must also apply to federal operations. It must shift from a reactive cleanup to proactive prevention. The polluter, not the public, must pay. Communities like Stokes Bay in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound deserve federal systems that work the first time. As our Conservative Party of Canada policy declaration clearly states, the government has an obligation to "establish and enforce safety standards for local and foreign vessels which operate in Canadian Waters for the well-being of workers as well as the environment." It also states that, "The Conservative Party stand[s] by its commitment to facilitate rehabilitation or demolition of abandoned and derelict vessels."

I believe the intent of the member proposing Bill C-244 is absolutely in the right direction to address derelict and abandoned vessels. I am not sure as drafted it will achieve this, but I look forward to hearing the continued debate. As I said, if this bill does get sent to committee, amendments can be made that will make the bill even stronger in terms of addressing this important issue not only in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound but across Canada in all our waters, whether they be lakes, oceans, etc.

● (1310)

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-244. It is a bill that delivers real accountability and takes a proactive approach to preventing marine pollution and abandoned vessels.

I would first like to thank my colleague, the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, for bringing this bill forward, which shows great leadership.

The first thing the bill does is amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act to make it clear that when pollution ends up in our oceans, the owner or operator of the polluting vessel is responsible, even when that pollution results from negligence, poor maintenance or foreseeable failure, not only when the intent can be proven.

Second, it amends the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act to stop vessel owners from off-loading end-of-life boats onto people they know do not have the means to maintain or safely dispose of them. It closes a loophole that allows responsibility to be transferred on paper while the pollution risk remains in the water.

These two changes are practical. They respond directly to what coastal communities live with every day. From the perspective of a coastal riding, where I live, the problem this bill addresses is not occasional; it is structural. Our system too often intervenes only after damage has already been done. We mobilize the Coast Guard once fuel is already in the water. We rely on volunteers, especially indigenous guardian programs, once debris is already on our coast. We scramble for funding once a vessel has already sunk. That approach costs more, harms ecosystems and downloads the responsibility onto communities that did not cause the problem.

Bill C-244 moves us toward a prevention-first approach. It strengthens accountability when pollution results from negligence, poor maintenance or foreseeable failure, not only when intent can be proven. Anyone who works around these harbours knows that some of the most damaging pollution comes from aging vessels or deferred maintenance and weak oversight. The ecological harm is the same whether a spill is deliberate or caused by neglect, so if we want to change behaviour, we have to change incentives.

Clear liability rules encourage better maintenance, safety planning and proper end-of-life management. When the costs of failure are real, prevention becomes cheaper than cleanup.

The bill also addresses a pattern that coastal communities see repeatedly, which is responsibility being passed along until no one is left holding it. Vessels nearing the end of their useful life are transferred, deteriorate and eventually sink. The community that then inherits that problem has to deal with the navigational hazard and the cleanup bill. That is not just an individual failure but a huge policy failure that the bill will address.

It is also important to be honest about why some of these transfers happen. Many vessel owners want to avoid the costs of the proper deconstruction of the vessel or the recycling of a boat at the end of its life rather than pay for responsible disposal. Some of them off-load these vessels cheaply or literally for free onto vulnerable or desperate people. A lot of people take these vessels just for housing. I have seen this first-hand in Tofino, where I lived for almost 25 years. With limited affordable housing, people ended up, and still live, on aging vessels tied to makeshift moorages. Those vessels are often not seaworthy, and the people living on them often do not have the resources to maintain or even safely dispose of them. The result is predictable. The vessel deteriorates, pollution increases, and when it finally sinks, the costs fall onto the community.

The bill helps close the loophole that allows responsibility to be pushed onto the most vulnerable. This is not about blaming people who are struggling to find housing; it is about ensuring that those who profit from vessels and control their disposal cannot avoid and evade responsibility by passing the problem down the line to someone who really has no realistic ability to manage those risks.

Private Members' Business

Marine pollution is also an economic issue. It undermines fisheries, tourism and working waterfronts. Clean waters are the foundation of coastal communities. Every abandoned vessel that sinks in a harbour imposes costs on local governments, first nations and taxpayers. Strong rules are not anti-economic but pro-community and pro-future. We know how sacred wild Pacific salmon is. The bill would protect it as well.

For these reasons, the NDP supports this bill at second reading. It improves accountability and strengthens prevention, which are things for which we have been calling for a long time, and it moves us in the right direction.

The bill also highlights how much further the federal government still needs to go. Even with the stronger liability rules, as the Transportation Safety Board has rightly pointed out in the past, Canada still has no coordinated response system for dealing with shipping container spills and marine debris incidents. We have seen the consequences of that over and over again, and I would like to see it addressed.

● (1315)

Containers were lost from the *Hanjin Seattle* in 2016. More than 100 containers fell from the *Zim Kingston* just a few years ago. More recently, a large barge off Bella Bella nearly went down with a full load. Each time, first nations and coastal communities were left to respond. Volunteers cleaned debris from beaches, and local governments and indigenous guardians dealt with the long-term impacts to ecosystems, fisheries and local economies. The lack of a coordinated response leaves our coast exposed incident after incident.

The *Zim Kingston* spill also exposed a deeper accountability gap that is similar to concerns outlined in the bill. Under current rules, the owner of the *Zim Kingston* can be held liable for damages and cleanup costs for only up to six years from the date of the incident, but the debris from that spill continues to wash up on our shores and will for decades. Microplastics and polystyrene fragments will persist in the marine environment long after that liability clock runs out.

Pollution does not end when a legal timeline expires. Communities and ecosystems live with the consequences long after corporate liability has ended; this is why relying on after-the-fact liability alone is not enough. We need preparedness, prevention and a standing response system that is ready before the next spill happens, not improvised afterward.

Private Members' Business

Coastal and indigenous communities keep telling Ottawa the same thing: They are tired of holding the bag when debris hits their shores. A coordinated response system backed by industry through mechanisms like an ecosystem service fee on cargo units and on ships would ensure that the costs of protecting our coasts are not downloaded onto communities and volunteers alone.

Any coordinated marine pollution response would be incomplete without reinstating the ghost gear fund. It was one of the most important conservation initiatives in Canadian history, tackling up to 800,000 tonnes annually of abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear that is among the deadliest sources of plastic pollution. I think of the Ocean Legacy foundation, the Coastal Restoration Society in my riding, the Surfrider Foundation Pacific Rim, and many other groups that did that work. The bill before us might strengthen legal liability standards against marine pollution, but a multi-year, permanent ghost gear fund focused on prevention and rapid response remains essential to keeping our coast clean.

This brings me to another piece of the prevention puzzle that Bill C-244 points towards but would not fully solve: What happens to vessels at the end of their life? If we are serious about stopping abandoned and derelict vessels from becoming pollution hazards, Canada needs a responsible ship recycling system here at home. Too many Canadian vessels are sold off, exported to jurisdictions with weaker standards, or left to deteriorate in our waters until they become hazardous waste. That is environmental negligence and economic leakage. We lose the jobs and the materials, and communities inherit the pollution.

Canadian vessels should be recycled here in Canada to high environmental and labour standards. That requires domestic ship recycling infrastructure, clear federal guidelines, and investment in facilities and training so vessels can be dismantled safely and responsibly. This is not only an environmental necessity; it is also an economic opportunity to create good, local jobs in coastal communities while preventing pollution before it happens.

In Port Alberni, in my riding, the ship recycling leadership group that I have been working on has brought together local governments, labour, environmental organizations, industry, and indigenous partners to develop a model for responsible ship recycling. A core guiding principle of that group is that ship recycling must be grounded in indigenous leadership, decision-making authority and consent. Responsible ship recycling cannot be imposed on communities, and it must be done with indigenous nations as true partners with leadership at the table, real decision-making authority and free, prior and informed consent. This is the standard Canada should be embedding in any national ship recycling framework.

Bill C-244 would strengthen accountability when vessels are abandoned or cause pollution. That is necessary. However, if we want to stop the problem at its source, we must also build the end-of-life solutions that make responsible disposal the easy, affordable way for vessel owners.

Parliament should support Bill C-244. It would close loopholes and strengthen prevention, but the government must act on container spills and marine debris, implement the Transportation Safety Board's recommendations and invest in Canadian ship recycling capacity with strong federal standards. If we fail to do the full job, we

will keep paying more to clean up pollution after the fact instead of preventing it at the source. Coastal communities deserve better than that.

● (1320)

Again, I want to thank my colleague the MP for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country for bringing this bill forward. I look forward to working with him on these additional concerns and solutions, from marine debris and container spills to building responsible ship recycling capacity here in Canada. New Democrats will be supporting this bill and will continue to push the government to do the full job of protecting our coasts, our communities and the waters we depend on.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I will now invite the hon. member for Victoria to resume his comments.

Will Greaves: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to continue.

I want to start again by expressing the thanks and appreciation that everybody in my community has to the Lekwungen-speaking peoples of southern Vancouver Island, the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ nations, whose stewardship of and care for the lands and waters that we live on today since time immemorial sets a high bar for our governments and communities to achieve today.

The bill before us proposes important amendments to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act to ensure that no person or ship can “allow the disposal” of substances in our waters. This is about proactive stewardship. It ensures that negligence is no longer a legal defence for polluting our marine ecosystems.

The Salish Sea, which surrounds my region and my riding, is an intricate ecosystem, home to species such as the southern resident killer whale and the chinook salmon. These species are put at risk when pollutants are introduced in our waterways, and we have a duty to act.

The clean coasts act is a common-sense, preventative measure. It would protect our blue economy, save millions in future salvage costs and honour our commitment to maintaining the health, beauty and accessibility of the B.C. coast and all of Canada's coasts for everyone.

I sincerely thank my colleague the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country for bringing this bill forward, and I urge all members of the House to support this important piece of legislation to keep our coasts clean, to keep owners accountable and to keep our oceans thriving.

• (1325)

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-244, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, and the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act.

I want to thank sponsor of the bill for bringing forward an issue that coastal, river and lakeside communities across Canada have been raising for years. It is definitely on the right path. This is a huge problem throughout Canada and the interior of British Columbia, which I represent, and also in our beautiful lakes such as Okanagan Lake, where abandoned vessels have caused environmental chaos.

Abandoned and derelict vessels, which are commonly referred to as DAVs, are a growing and serious threat to our ecosystems, our fisheries, our aquatic habitats and the Canadians who depend on them. These vessels pollute our waters, endanger marine life, block navigational routes, pose real safety risks to workers, first responders and entire communities, and affect tourism.

Conservatives believe in protecting Canadian waterways and conserving our marine environment. We believe government has a responsibility to ensure the rules meant to protect our oceans and lakes are actually enforced. When vessels operate in Canadian waters, whether they are local, commercial or foreign, they must meet strong standards that keep Canadians safe and protect the environment.

Leaving abandoned vessels to rot and pollute our coasts and beautiful lakes is not an option. We have seen this over and over again in my riding and in the Okanagan Valley. Vessels have sunk at docks, leaked fuel into water or sat for years because no one could determine ownership or responsibility. In many cases, communities are left to manage the environmental and safety risks of these vessels without the resources or authority to act.

For small communities, whether coastal or lakefront, the cost is overwhelming. They are often forced to choose between letting a vessel sit and pollute or diverting scarce funds away from housing, infrastructure or essential services just to deal with a problem that should never have existed in the first place.

After nearly a decade in government, the Liberal response has been more spending and more bureaucracy, with very little to show for it. An example can be seen through the oceans protection plan, where over \$300 million has been allocated to deal with abandoned and derelict vessels. Since 2016, that spending has resulted in the removal of just 791 vessels. That is an average cost of more than \$379,000 per vessel.

Meanwhile, 1,355 derelict vessels remain on the Canadian Coast Guard's inventory list. At this pace, taxpayers could be forced to spend more than half a billion dollars just to clear the existing backlog. That is not value for money. It is not effective environmental

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policy, and it is certainly not responsible stewardship of public funds.

The problem is not a lack of legislation. The problem is a lack of enforcement, coordination and accountability. During testimony before the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, witnesses, including government officials, made it clear that federal departments are not working effectively together. Even basic functions, such as managing private buoy regulations, have fallen through the cracks after being transferred between departments. These bureaucratic breakdowns delay assessments, slow removals and leave communities waiting year after year for actions that never come. Municipalities want action, including municipalities in my riding that have been asking for this for years, while Ottawa continues to get in the way of being a partner.

Another major failure is the vessel registration system itself. Without reliable ownership records, enforcement is impossible. Vessels are sold, resold and resold again, often without ownership transfers being properly reported. When a vessel becomes abandoned or hazardous, officials cannot identify who is responsible and the polluter does not pay; the taxpayer does. The problem is that Bill C-244 attempts to address this issue but would not fix the root cause.

• (1330)

Clause 3 proposes to prohibit the transfer of ownership if the seller knows that the buyer is reckless or lacks the ability, resources or intent to maintain the vessel properly. That would be impossible to know.

While the intention may be to prevent pollution, the language is vague and raises serious concerns. How is a seller expected to determine a buyer's intent or financial capability? Are sellers supposed to demand financial statements, conduct interviews or predict future behaviour? What happens in online auctions, which are increasingly common? What about cross-border sales? How long does the liability follow the seller after the sale has occurred?

These unanswered questions create legal uncertainty and risk punishing Canadians who are acting in good faith. Instead of clarity, this amendment risks adding confusion, litigation and unintended consequences, especially when existing regulations are already not being enforced.

Private Members' Business

Unfortunately, Canadians are now abandoning vessels simply because they cannot afford repairs, moorage or disposal. Even more troubling, many Canadians are being forced to live aboard old, unsafe boats because they have nowhere else to go. We see this constantly in Okanagan Lake and throughout the interior. Vessels are being used now as makeshift housing, but these are boats that were never designed to be lived in. Many lack proper sanitation or waste disposal, creating serious risks of pollution. Others pose fire hazards, safety risks and concerns related to criminal activity.

A housing crisis has now spilled into our waterways, turning a social crisis into an environmental one. That is not compassionate policy. That is a result of years of federal mismanagement.

Conservatives believe in caring for our waters and the people who depend on them. That means ensuring the polluter pays principle can actually be enforced. It means fixing the vessel registration system, so ownership is clear and accountability is real. It means coordinating across federal, provincial, municipal and first nations governments, instead of burying communities in red tape.

I am looking forward to the amendments that will come forward concerning this bill, because the issue is extremely important. Conservatives are ready to work towards practical, accountable and results-driven solutions, ones that would truly protect our coasts, our lakes and our environment for generations to come.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country for his right of reply.

Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to recognize the profound loss being felt by the community of Tumbler Ridge. All members of the House grieve with the families who are mourning. We stand with the students, staff and first responders who are carrying the weight of this unimaginable tragedy. In times like these, we are reminded that in sorrow, we are united as a nation. Canada will hold them in our hearts, not just today and in the years to come, but always.

I want to thank all of the members who have participated in this debate on Bill C-244, the clean coasts act, for their local leadership and for sharing the all-too-familiar stories that I am hearing in my riding as well.

This bill is grounded in a simple principle. Canada's marine environment is not a dumping ground, and coastal communities should not be left carrying the cost of pollution that others create. In coastal regions across the country, residents see the impacts firsthand: abandoned and derelict vessels leaking fuel into harbours and marine infrastructure left to decay, spreading plastic pollution and releasing toxins into sensitive ecosystems. These are not abstract concerns. They affect navigation safety, local economies, indigenous food security and the health of our oceans and waterways.

Bill C-244 proposes two practical solutions to address these problems. First, it amends the Canadian Environmental Protection Act to clarify that marine dumping is a strict liability offence. Because of how this legislation has been interpreted to date, liability is limited to cases where the prosecution can prove that this dumping was intentional. That leaves a troubling loophole where pollution

from reckless or negligent behaviour goes unaddressed. The clean coasts act addresses this gap.

Second, the bill strengthens the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act by addressing a well-known tactic. Too often, owners avoid their disposal responsibilities by transferring an end-of-life vessel, typically for a nominal amount, to someone that they know cannot dispose of it properly. That is how vessels become hazards in our waterways.

Some members have raised fair and important questions about how these measures would work in practice, and I would like to respond directly to those.

One question has been about seller liability. Let me be clear: This bill is not about punishing good-faith sellers or ordinary Canadians making responsible transactions. The intent is narrow. Liability rises only where a vessel is transferred knowingly or recklessly to someone who lacks the ability or intention to manage it responsibly.

Related to that is the question of how a seller can assess whether a buyer is fit. This bill does not require intrusive measures like interviews, credit checks or financial investigations. It requires reasonable care, not a guarantee of the future behaviour of an owner. The objective is to create clear, practical expectations that are not onerous for good-faith sellers while discouraging bad-faith transfers to avoid disposal costs. I just want to recognize that these were questions that came from the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and the member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Members have also raised questions about enforcement and ownership tracking. We have good news. Since this debate started, Transport Canada has announced a modernization of the pleasure craft licensing system by introducing a five-year licence validity, a nominal fee for applications and renewals, and a requirement for owners to update their contact information within 30 days. However, the responsibility to report these transfers remains with the buyer. This has been a vulnerability that has been addressed by a number of members, including the member for Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, and it needs to be addressed.

While these licensing changes are a step forward, we need to make sure that there are sustainable long-term resources to deal with abandoned and derelict vessels where we cannot identify the owner. For that, we need the long-awaited vessel remediation fund, which will have a small user fee and will finance the removal and proper disposal of abandoned and sunken vessels. I just want to note that the member for Courtenay—Alberni brought this up as a need. I look forward to working with him.

[*Translation*]

There is also the member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères. These vessels should never linger in these places for five years or more.

[*English*]

Lastly, there was a concern brought forward by the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley about the wording of the new strict liability offence. I just want to confirm that this will not affect people that would observe marine dumping. This is only for those who would lead to that by their acts or omissions.

I would just say that all legislation improves through study. If this legislation proceeds to committee, members will have the opportunity to hear from experts, examine the provisions carefully and propose amendments as they see fit, including any measures that are necessary to clarify some of the measures in this act.

With that, I know this is a problem that all members know exists. I urge all members to support this legislation being sent to the next stage at committee.

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• (1335)

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

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

• (1340)

Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 25, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Before we adjourn, I will just wish everyone a very happy Valentine's Day and a happy Family Day next week, as we return to our ridings to serve our constituents.

It being 1:40 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, February 23, at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:40 p.m.)

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