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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, April 19, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[*English*]

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION ACT

The House resumed from February 12 consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Nepean.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that Canada's Parliament is located on the ancestral unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

Our collective journey on the path of reconciliation, healing and understanding is not merely a path we choose to walk; it is an essential step toward a better future and an acknowledgement of past wrongs. This is about acknowledging that while we cannot change the past, we have the power and, indeed, the responsibility to shape a better future, which is exactly what Bill C-29, the piece of legislation we are debating today, is all about. Simply put, it would establish a national council for reconciliation.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was chaired by the Hon. Murray Sinclair, investigated the history and the legacy of residential schools and released its final report. It came after six years of hearings and testimonies of more than 6,000 residential school survivors and their loved ones. The report included 94 calls to action to address the legacy of residential schools and to achieve true reconciliation based on the experiences and recommendations of survivors. Our government is committed to implementing each and every one of those calls to action.

This legislation responds to call to action numbers 53 to 56. The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded that “all levels of government must make a new commitment to reconciliation and accountability.” The Truth and Reconciliation Commission further noted that Indigenous peoples and Canadians will benefit from the establishment of an oversight body to evaluate

and to report on progress made toward fulfilling commitments and to ensure that the necessary educational resources to advance reconciliation are available to all Canadians.

On this journey, it is crucial that we listen, truly listen, to the stories of those who have been affected by our history. These stories, though often fraught with pain and injustice, are vital in understanding the depth of the hurt that has been caused. They remind us that behind every call to action, there are human faces and stories that deserve to be heard and to be acknowledged.

To that end, this bill was brought forward after extensive engagement with Indigenous peoples and organizations. Our government as well as parliamentarians in both chambers have worked tirelessly to ensure that the bill before us today is at the heart of what Indigenous people have been asking for in this country. Parliamentarians have made important amendments, and the government accepts all of them.

Walking the path of reconciliation requires consistent action and a desire to forge a new relationship based on mutual respect, trust and nation-to-nation recognition, to which Indigenous peoples are entitled. This work is vital, complex and long term. That is why it is crucial that we have systems to measure the progress we are making as a country as we work toward reconciliation and that we hold the government accountable to its obligations. The council would do just that.

Reconciliation requires more than just words. It demands action. It challenges us to move beyond the mere acknowledgement of past injustices to the implementation of concrete steps that address these wrongs. While the Leader of the Opposition offers platitudes on the necessity of reconciliation, there remains a stark contrast between his rhetoric and the actions, or lack thereof, taken by his party.

That is why the National Council for Reconciliation is so important. It would be an independent, permanent body that would oversee the progress of reconciliation efforts in Canada. It aims to promote respect, dialogue and understanding between Canadian and Indigenous peoples. The council would provide oversight and would hold the government accountable for advancing reconciliation with Indigenous communities, including monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

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We know progress has been made, but I hope that everyone in this place would agree that there is more to do. As amended, this bill strengthens the accountability of governments to respond to council concerns in terms of measuring progress. The establishment of such a council reflects a commitment to creating mechanisms for ongoing dialogue, for respect for Indigenous rights and for a concerted effort to address historical injustices and the legacy of colonialism. It signifies a step forward in the journey toward reconciliation, aiming to ensure that the actions and the policies of the future are informed by a comprehensive understanding of the past and present realities faced by indigenous peoples in Canada.

• (1005)

I encourage my colleagues to support the bill, as amended, as it represents a critical step toward bridging the gap between words and action.

Meegwetch. Qujannamiik. Marsi.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I do feel that the implementation of the calls to action certainly needs oversight because the final report of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation came out in 2015, and the government has barely moved on it.

I appreciated the member's comments, particularly about acknowledging history, because we are in a time when there is a rise of residential school denialism. In fact, the Conservative leader, the member for Carleton, on the day we were meeting with families searching the landfill, was doing fundraising with a group that puts out articles regularly citing residential school denialism, particularly with unmarked graves.

I am wondering what my colleague thinks about a need to put in place legislation to deal with residential school denialism as a form of hate speech.

• (1010)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, it is certainly a tough question to answer, in terms of whether legislation is required for that. Unfortunately, we live in a day and age when misinformation is spread so wildly. We do not even seem to have a standard on who is willing to distribute that information in this day and age.

At the heart of this is information and making sure that Canadians know exactly what happened. We have a very difficult past to reconcile with. We have the obligation to ensure that we do everything we possibly can. I would even go as far as saying that this is why this legislation is so important. If a council is established permanently, as an act of this Parliament, it becomes much more difficult for a potential future government to dismantle it. Therefore, that council would continue to exist in perpetuity to be able to monitor the progress of the calls to action.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am quite dismayed at the comment by our NDP colleague across the way, but I will leave that for another day. It is par for the course with the NDP team they have.

Why were the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, an organization that represents 800 status and non-status, off-reserve, urban indige-

nous peoples, and the Native Women's Association of Canada not included in this program?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I do not have an answer to the member's specific question in terms of the particular organizations that he referenced. What I do know, as I indicated in my speech, there was an absolute ton of work done in creating this commission and in consulting with indigenous peoples directly.

I am a partisan person. I think the Speaker would acknowledge that. When I stand in the House, I am quite partisan. I will take the shots where I see necessary. I really hope that on this particular issue, an issue as important as this, the entire House can support it. We are talking about establishing a council with oversight. I really hope that we can put aside partisanship and that we can move forward in doing what it is right because I know, at heart, every member believes that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-29 is fully in line with what the Bloc Québécois has been advocating for a long time, namely the nation-to-nation relationship between indigenous nations, the Quebec nation and the Canadian nation. This resonates perfectly with us. We encourage it and value it enormously. I would just like to mention the agreement reached by Premier Bernard Landry known as Paix des Braves, or peace of the braves. That was a big step for Quebec.

That said, I simply want to take this opportunity to remind the government that there is still a law called the Indian Act. It is 2024. The Indian Act is totally unacceptable, unfair and discriminatory. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, it is certainly off topic in terms of this particular bill, but I am happy to answer that question. I completely agree that, with respect to having an act with that name in 2024, we should be moving in the direction of replacing it and probably updating legislation in the process.

• (1015)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on the legislation that provides for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation. It would be an independent, non-political, permanent and indigenous-led organization with a purpose to advance efforts for reconciliation with indigenous peoples. This council would track our progress on implementing the calls to action, a road map for reconciliation.

I wish to reiterate that we are committed to implementing the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, advancing reconciliation and working in partnership with first nations, Inuit and Métis. We will implement all the calls to action and advance reconciliation in partnership with first nations, Inuit and Métis.

We recognize the crucial role played by the Senate of Canada, which is often referred to as the chamber of sober second thought. This body serves as a vital check on the legislative process, ensuring that laws enacted by the House of Commons receive thorough review and consideration.

The Senate's recent amendments to a key piece of legislation exemplify its essential function. By refining terms, clarifying language and specifying functions, the Senate has enhanced not only the clarity of the law but also its effectiveness in serving the diverse needs of Canadians, particularly emphasizing respect and precision in matters involving indigenous governing bodies.

The amendments, such as the explicit use of the terms “first nations”, “Inuit” and “Métis” in the preamble, focus on inclusivity and the acknowledgement of Canada's indigenous peoples. They also improve governance by defining the scope and functions of the new council and by ensuring transparency with the tabling of an annual report.

These adjustments are crucial for meaningful consultation and co-operation with indigenous communities. Let us value and respect the Senate's diligent work. Its amendments contribute significantly to making legislation more just, more precise and better suited to serving our society's needs. The Senate's thoughtful revisions ensure our laws reflect the voices and rights of all Canadians.

Indigenous peoples in Canada, comprising first nations, Métis and Inuit communities, represent diverse and vibrant cultures with distinct traditions, languages and histories. Today these groups face a complex set of challenges and opportunities. Socially and economically, indigenous people often experience higher rates of poverty, lower educational attainment, health disparities and limited access to essential services compared with non-indigenous Canadians. These issues are rooted in historical injustices, such as colonization and the residential school system.

However, there is ongoing progress in addressing these challenges. Recent years have seen increased governmental and public recognition of indigenous rights and sovereignty. Efforts towards reconciliation are evident in initiatives such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, which aim to rectify historical wrongs. Indigenous political and cultural resurgence is also notable, with indigenous leaders playing key roles in national dialogues about environmental protection, economic development and cultural preservation.

We can imagine a Canada where the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action are fully realized, a nation defined by understanding, justice and mutual respect. The impact of implementing these calls is profound, promising a future where all Canadians, including first nations, Métis and Inuit, share equally in the prosperity and cultural richness of our country. By acknowledging and correcting the historical and systemic injustices faced by indigenous peoples, we foster a national spirit of genuine reconciliation. This means not only recognizing past wrongs but also actively working to rectify them.

● (1020)

Education systems would teach the true history of indigenous peoples, fostering understanding and respect from a young age. Meanwhile, health and justice systems would be reformed to eliminate systemic biases, ensuring that indigenous communities receive equitable treatment.

The economic impact would be significant as well. By supporting indigenous businesses and integrating traditional knowledge in-

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to our economic practices, we unlock new opportunities for innovation and sustainability. Socially, as barriers are dismantled, we would see stronger, more inclusive communities across Canada, enriched by the diverse cultures and traditions of indigenous peoples. This is an investment in the future not only of indigenous communities but of all Canadians, creating a society that truly reflects our values of fairness and equality.

These are the reasons I stand here to discuss the imperative of fully implementing the calls to action of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This comprehensive report is not merely a document. It is a blueprint for healing and partnership, aimed at righting the historical injustices faced by indigenous peoples in Canada.

For too long, the voices of first nations, Métis and Inuit communities have been marginalized. The residential school system stripped away language, culture and identity and stands as a dark chapter in our national history. The calls to action provide us with a path to acknowledge these painful truths, to learn from them and to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

Implementing these calls to action is not just a moral obligation but also a vital step towards building a just society in which the rights and cultures of indigenous peoples are respected. It is about creating educational programs that reflect the true history of Canada, reforming the justice system to be equitable and ensuring that health and child welfare services meet the needs of indigenous communities.

Let us embrace this opportunity to foster reconciliation, to build bridges and to work hand in hand with indigenous communities toward a shared and equitable future. The path is laid out before us. It is time for action, commitment and perseverance. Let us move forward together, not as separate entities but as united Canadians, honouring every chapter of our shared history.

The council, as outlined in Bill C-29, would be an independent, non-partisan body dedicated to overseeing the ongoing efforts towards reconciliation. It marks a profound shift toward ensuring that these efforts are led by those who understand them deeply, our indigenous peoples.

Notably, the board of directors, primarily composed of indigenous members—

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, this is a just a friendly reminder not to refer to indigenous people as “our indigenous people”, because we are not pets.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for pointing that out. I sincerely apologize. It was a mistake on my part.

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Notably, the board of directors, primarily composed of indigenous members, will include representatives nominated by major indigenous organizations, ensuring a broad and inclusive range of voices in guiding the council's mission. This legislation empowers the council to monitor and evaluate our nation's progress in addressing the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The annual report produced by the council, and the Prime Minister's mandated response, would ensure transparency and accountability, providing a clear measure of our progress. By incorporating the council under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, we would also ensure that it has a solid structural and legal foundation to operate effectively and independently.

The path to reconciliation is long and challenging. However, with the establishment of the national council for reconciliation, we would reaffirm our commitment to a just and equitable future. Let us move forward together, with renewed dedication and hope.

In the coming years, the status of indigenous peoples in Canada is anticipated to reflect significant advancements in reconciliation and self-determination. Building on current trends, there will likely be greater acknowledgement and implementation of indigenous rights, with increased political representation and leadership across various sectors.

• (1025)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, while this bill is important, it is definitely not enough. It was unfortunate that, when the Minister of Finance gave her budget presentation, she did not even mention indigenous peoples or reconciliation.

The government is not even increasing enough what needs to be done to lift indigenous peoples out of poverty. He mentioned marginalization; that did not end when residential schools ended. It is allowed to continue because governments, such as the Liberal government, continue to underinvest in indigenous peoples.

Does the member agree the Liberal government needs to show action and not just use symbolism when it comes to working with indigenous peoples and reconciliation?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that this legislation is not enough. This is a path towards doing what is right and just, and we have been doing it for the last eight and a half years. We have shown a real commitment to taking concrete steps and implementing a lot of steps. I agree there is still much more work to do.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, a few moments ago, my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles asked a question and received an answer.

Given that we are not doing enough and that there is an urgent need for action on the Indian Act, does my colleague agree that we need to prioritize this issue to show that we really want things to change? Does my colleague agree with his colleague who spoke before him?

[English]

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, I repeat that we have shown a real commitment, not just with words but with actions. We have made it a point to do so. The things that we have done during the last eight and a half years, the things we are doing with this particular bill, show a real commitment to doing what is just and right.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would have to disagree with my hon. colleague's bragging about everything the government did.

The budget just came out. There is no mention of indigenous people, and the Liberals actually put more money into auto theft than they did into the MMIWG crisis. It sends a very clear message, as I pointed out to the minister, that Canada cares more about finding cars than it does about finding indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. That does not look like reconciliation to me.

I would also point out there are more kids in care now than at the height of residential schools, partly because of ongoing systemic racism, which has been reported. The government has been in power eight years since the truth and reconciliation report was released in 2015. It is just now putting in place an oversight body, after 10 years. Madam Speaker, give me a break.

Is my colleague willing to be honest and admit that his government needs to do more if we are going to achieve reconciliation in this country?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, I have to respectfully disagree with the member. The cumulative amount that we have invested in indigenous peoples' needs during the last eight and a half years is out there; it is public. We can see the commitment we have shown and what we have done.

I agree that more needs to be done. We have been doing it, and we will continue to do it.

• (1030)

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Last night I referenced four documents in a speech concerning wet, limp and utterly useless paper straws. I would like to table the four studies showing that it is worse for the environment—

An hon. member: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: You're welcome.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I want to remind the hon. member that he asked his question and I gave him an answer.

I also want to remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that, if he wishes to have a further conversation on this with the member, they should step outside.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I rise to speak to Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

What does the word “reconciliation” mean? After nine years of the current government, what we have seen is that it has become a buzzword. Reconciliation is about walking shoulder to shoulder, listening, learning and being open to admitting that wrongs were done.

Bill C-29 is a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action 53 to 56. I will remind the House that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was founded by our former prime minister, Stephen Harper, in the former Conservative government. Throughout these conversations, there is always finger pointing that goes on, but I would hazard that there is enough blame to go around on all sides.

We have seen, in the last nine years, the government picking winners and losers, pitting first nations against first nations, first nations against non-first nations, Métis against Métis, and Métis against non-Métis. We have seen our Prime Minister thank indigenous protesters who were simply protesting the fact that the boil water advisories in their communities are ongoing. What did he do when he was at his fancy function? He thanked them for their donation. We have seen him cast away the first indigenous female Attorney General, Jody Wilson-Raybould. She spoke truth to power and was cast aside.

We have seen the Prime Minister stand there with his hand on his heart, dabbing away a fake tear with a tissue, saying that this is his most important relationship. However, as we just heard, the government has launched its ninth budget without any mention of reconciliation for indigenous peoples, so members will have to pardon me if I seem a bit skeptical about what the government is planning with Bill C-29.

Over the time of my being elected, whether with my current file on mental health and suicide prevention or my previous files on transportation or fisheries, the government likes to say that it has consulted. However, is it truly consultation and engagement, or is it merely putting a checkmark in a box on a sheet that says what they had to do and complete? True engagement means sitting at the table and fully understanding all sides.

What has brought us to this point? In recent years, we heard about the horrors of the residential school program, but the world is just waking up to what some of us have been hearing for many years. The residential school program was designed to drive the Indian out of the children, and thousands upon thousands of first nations, Inuit and Métis children were taken from their homes and never returned.

● (1035)

Sitting with residential school survivors and listening to their stories is horrible. The start of the ground sonar search in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George was at the former St. Joseph's Mission Residential School in my hometown of Williams Lake. I am on record saying that I grew up just down the road from this school, yet I had no idea of the horrors that were going on at that school.

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These were kids that I played with. I know many of them to this day. They are my friends and family. My family is first nations as well. Watching a residential school survivor come to the lands for a ceremony marking the start of the ground sonar search and watching them shake and become so emotional as those memories come flooding back is absolutely heartbreaking.

In nine years of the government, it has only fully implemented 11 of the 94 calls to action, and only eight of the 76 calls that are the federal government's responsibility. Why did it take four years for the Liberals to implement this after the Prime Minister made the announcement about it in 2018? Why are they still not bringing in or listening to all of the indigenous groups that want to be a part of this?

There are the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, an organization that represents over 800 status and non-status, off-reserve, urban indigenous peoples, and the Native Women's Association of Canada, an organization that represents women and children on and off reserve. At committee, our Conservative team, the Bloc and NDP members passed a motion to include these two national organizations. However, when the rubber hit the road, when it came time to make sure they were part of it, our NDP colleagues sided with their Liberal friends and voted to exclude the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, effectively silencing the voices of 800,000 off-reserve indigenous peoples. Why?

Reconciliation is about inclusion. Reconciliation is about recognizing economic prosperity, allowing indigenous individuals and communities to recognize their full potential. It is unbelievable that we are still debating this bill. The fact that this bill is still here, the fact that we are still in the process of debating it after having numerous amendments and speeches, speaks to the government's failure to meaningfully consult and advance this issue.

Now the Liberals are going to stand up and I guarantee that at one point we are going to hear that the bill has been blocked and there have been lots of dilatory motions from this side, but they have the majority. If the Liberals want to push something through, with their NDP colleagues they can push it through.

Our Conservative colleagues worked diligently at the committee to improve the bill. Is that not the message we always give? Just let it pass, let it get to committee and we will make it better there. However, again, we have heard that they blocked and left out two important groups.

● (1040)

The Liberals talk about consultation. Does Bill C-29 truly represent the work and consultation they have done? Does it truly represent all the indigenous people, or does it just simply reflect the views of those who are friends of the Liberal government?

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We know that recently there are about 113 indigenous groups in Ontario that are taking the federal government to court over boil water advisories. The government talks a good game, but the truth is in its actions. As important as the bill is, it also highlights the failure of the Liberal government to listen to Canadians, to listen meaningfully and to consult with indigenous peoples.

This is, of course, not the first time we have spoken about the Liberals' inability to consult and listen. They always seem to go down the path of just ticking the boxes of the groups that are in agreement with them. They use that as their record of consultation, yet they have left a whole community of indigenous peoples out when it pertains to Bill C-29.

A concern we have is that, time and again, we see these bills that come forth, and they are not perfect, and then the consequences are faced afterwards. We will hear comments from the other side, saying that we should never let perfection get in the way of getting something done.

I have talked about winners and losers with the government. I have talked about my friend Chief Willie Sellars in Williams Lake. He is the chief of his community who, in all senses of the word, is leading by example. He is not waiting for the government to provide handouts. He has done everything to lead his nation and his community to economic prosperity.

Ellis Ross, a provincial MLA in British Columbia, walks the walk. I remember sitting at a presentation with him about 10 years ago, and he said that we do not need all these fancy words and we don't need to listen to an unelected group, the United Nations, with the calls to action. What we need, he said, is the government to get out of the way, to allow us to chart our own path forward.

Is this council going to be just another arm of the minister of the day? These are the questions we have. Will the government even listen to the national council? It has spent the last nine years over-promising and under-delivering on indigenous issues. How many communities still have the boil water advisories? It is unbelievable.

I remember the speeches we did in the House during one of the first emergency debates we had. It was on the suicide epidemic on Attawapiskat First Nation. It was heartbreaking for me to hear the stories we were hearing.

Sadly, I ask if things have gotten better for indigenous peoples in the last nine years under the current government. In 2015, the Prime Minister stood and promised that this was his most important relationship.

• (1045)

It is complex, I will give the Liberals that, but if this was truly the Prime Minister's most important relationship, why have they just announced so much spending in a budget in which we would spend more money servicing our debt than we do on health care? When the books were open, the safe was open, and they were throwing money at everything, yet there was not a mention of indigenous peoples or reconciliation. It is frustrating. What would be measured with this council? What gets measured, gets done.

Conservatives will be supporting this bill because we believe in the premise that we have to have everyone around the table. True

reconciliation begins with understanding and, as I said earlier, listening with open hearts, open ears and open eyes. My concern with the government is that this is just here to placate. There is no real meaning or value behind doing this.

It is frustrating, as I already said earlier in my speech, that we are debating this today, when it could have been done previously. It has been nine years.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I am getting heckled from the other side, but the government has had nine years to get this done, and now, at the eleventh hour, with the last few shreds of power it has, it is putting this forward. It has taken forever for it to do this.

That being said, as I mentioned, Conservatives will be supporting this bill. We hope that some amendments we put forward will be agreed to. We hope that all indigenous peoples would be included at the table. The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Native Women's Association of Canada are two organizations that we feel should be included in this. They should have a say with at least one director at the table.

• (1050)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the empathy from my hon. colleague, but the Conservatives have quite a history. If we talk about their history with reconciliation, I will start with former prime minister Stephen Harper, who said that MMIWG was not on his "radar".

Tanya Kappo, an indigenous lawyer, wrote, "In a span of a week, the Conservative government confirmed their feelings of indifference, disregard and utter lack of respect for indigenous people."

If we fast-forward to today, the member for Carleton, the current leader of the Conservative Party, actively fraternizes with residential school denialists. In fact, there is an article entitled "Poilievre delivers speech to a group criticized for residential school 'denialism'", to which the former national chief of the AFN Archibald said in a media statement, "I condemn any association with denialist views and the deep hurt they cause our survivors and their families". He has had to apologize in the past for minimizing and denying the impacts of residential schools when he was a minister.

The member wants to talk about nine years; I want to talk about before the last nine years. I am not saying the government is doing a good job, but it is pretty rich for the Conservatives, when their leader actively fraternizes with residential school denialists, to talk about how they care about indigenous people.

Will my hon. colleague acknowledge the level of denialism that his party—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am hearing side conversations about the opportunity the Speaker allows members to speak. I want to indicate to those individuals that I look at the room to see how many members are standing up for questions and comments, and I base the decision on how much time to allow each member to speak on that. I would remind members that I am paying attention to the time, and I will actively indicate when it is time to end the question and when it is time to answer the question.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George has the floor.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, it is disappointing to hear the comments from our colleague down the way.

I always say that those in glass houses should not throw rocks, and I would say that it was our former prime minister, Stephen Harper, who started the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

However, I have never seen a prime minister be more indignant on one hand, and stand here whenever the cameras are on to say that this is his most important relationship, but then absolutely turn away and shun our first indigenous female attorney general, a person who is a dear and close friend of mine. I have seen, over the last nine years, the damage the Prime Minister has done within indigenous communities, pitting indigenous community against indigenous community, and pitting indigenous community against non-indigenous community. I have seen the Prime Minister smirk and smile when hearing the plight of those in our gallery, or in our House, talking about their communities and the indigenous peoples within the communities they are a part of.

I will remind my colleague that this is the government that is in power. This is a government that made a tremendous amount of promises over the last nine years and has failed at every step. This is a Prime Minister who thanked indigenous protesters who were simply protesting the fact that they do not have potable water in their communities and have to boil—

• (1055)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will give the hon. member the same amount of time that I gave to the hon. member asking the question. We need to go to other questions as there are other members who are rising.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech with interest.

I would, first of all, say that it is encouraging to hear that the Conservatives are considering supporting this legislation, given that they did not support the passage of the UN declaration act. Having heard that from this member and other members in the Conservative Party, would the member commit to allowing the bill to carry on the voices today so that we do not have to wait another week to vote on it?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague knows full well that this is a discussion for House leadership and not one that I can speak to.

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It is disappointing, as this is a minister of the Crown and minister of this file asking the question, that it has taken the Liberals four years to get to this point. However, she is one that I have a great deal of respect for in the work that we did on 988 and on the mental health of Canadians, but she has stumbled into this file and has stumbled along the way, likely because of the leadership, or lack thereof, of her Prime Minister.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for the empathy and goodwill toward indigenous people that were so evident in his speech. I think it is important to do the work required to move closer to reconciliation. We learned that he is going to vote in favour of Bill C-29, which can only be a positive thing.

Obviously, the Conservatives are not the government. They are the opposition. However, there are things they could do right now to help with reconciliation. Not so long ago, for example, their leader held a big celebration of the well-known John A. Macdonald, who created residential schools, had Louis Riel hanged and came up with a strategy to cause famine among indigenous peoples.

Does my colleague think that celebrations like this are appropriate against a backdrop of reconciliation?

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that we get these questions from the Bloc and others talking about the past when we are looking forward to the future. We are here today to talk about a bill, Bill C-29, which we all agree is important and needed. Unfortunately, we have parties who just want to continue to point fingers. They are doing everything to try to take a very non-partisan piece of legislation and turn it into a partisan hit job.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really do appreciate the words from my colleague from northern British Columbia. I know that he represents a number of first nations and Métis in his riding, and he does a fantastic job bringing their voices here to Ottawa. We saw that reflected in his speech.

My question to him revolves around this piece of legislation, and I am speaking about those living off of first nations who represent status, non-status and Métis. I am specifically speaking to the fact that the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples has been left off of the founding table, despite representing a large number of indigenous people living off reserve. That would then dictate the path going forward. That is something we advocated strongly for at committee. Unfortunately, the government did not listen, so I would like to get his comments on that.

Statements by Members

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, we know that there is a very large community of indigenous youth, status and non-status youth, living off reserve and within the urban centres, as well as families who live off reserve. Our family is one of them.

The government has chosen to leave out the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, an organization that represents over 800,000 status and non-status indigenous peoples, as well as the Native Women's Association of Canada, an organization that represents women and children on and off reserve. That is par for the course. We have seen time and time again with the government that it has chosen to pick winners and losers. They have done the same with Bill C-29, and it is disappointing.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

FREEDOM DAY IN PORTUGAL

Mr. Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution, also referred to as Freedom Day in Portugal.

At the crack of dawn on April 25, 1974, songs of liberty played over the radio. It marked the start of what became known as the bloodless revolution.

As the army stood guard at the capital, children began placing carnations in the barrels of soldiers' rifles. That love and compassion tugged at the hearts of citizens and generals alike. By day's end, the people peacefully triumphed over a fascist regime, ending 40 years of totalitarian rule.

Portugal and its diaspora around the world gather to celebrate *25 de abril* based on values of liberty, equality and the rule of law. It is also a reminder for all of us that democracy and freedom must prevail.

To my fellow Portuguese across Canada, *Feliz Dia da Liberdade*.

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine Liberal Pinocchio budgets and nine straight deficits on which every Liberal projection has been wrong, the NDP-Liberal government is still not worth the cost.

After nine years, we have a new Liberal double-double. NDP-Liberals have doubled the cost of government, doubled Canada's debt, doubled the taxes Canadians pay, doubled the interest on Canada's debt and doubled the cost of rent and mortgages.

Are government services twice as good? Is our health care twice as good? Are defence and national security twice as good? The answer, of course, is that all are worse.

Liberals have added more debt to Canada than all other governments combined in our history, and now Canadians are paying \$44 billion in interest on the Canadian credit card. The Liberal budget

plan will drive this number to \$60 billion in five years. Today that is more money than we spend on health care.

After nine years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, but there is good news. Common-sense Conservatives will replace Liberal hurt with Conservative hope. We will axe the tax, build the homes—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Oakville North—Burlington has the floor.

ORGAN DONATION

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, organ donation saves lives. One organ donor can save up to eight lives. However, less than 25% of people living in Canada are registered donors, even though 90% of Canadians say they support organ donation.

In Ontario, 1,400 people on average are waiting for a life-saving organ, with thousands more needing transformative tissue donation. Sadly, every three days someone will die waiting.

Thanks to a private member's bill put forward by my colleague from Calgary Confederation, becoming an organ donor in Canada is easier than ever. Ontario residents like me are able to tick a box on our tax return, indicating whether or not we would like to become an organ and tissue donor.

Since 2022, 2.5 million Canadians in Ontario and Nunavut have indicated their intention. I encourage all provinces and territories to sign up for this life-saving initiative.

BRAIN INJURY

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, more than 165,000 new cases of traumatic brain injury occur annually in Canada. In fact, this current number is likely underestimated because of under-reporting of cases stemming from concussions, intimate partner violence, combat injuries and survival of toxic substance poisoning.

Beyond the significant physical damage people experience from traumatic brain injury, we know there is a link between brain injury and further challenges with mental health, substance misuse, homelessness and incarceration.

It is necessary to support education and prevention measures and interventions. My hon. colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford has brought forward Bill C-277 to establish a national strategy on brain injuries act.

The legislation is driven by the support of so many living with brain injuries and organizations like the Nanaimo Brain Injury Society, which provides tremendous support and advocacy.

I urge all hon. members to add their support to the voices calling for a national strategy on brain injuries.

* * *

SUDBURY REGIONAL SCIENCE FAIR

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what do metallurgical mushrooms, decomposition and capturing wind energy on cars have in common? Those are just some of the Sudbury Regional Science Fair projects heading to the national science fair competition.

Sixty-three students participated in this year's annual Sudbury Regional Science Fair. Seven students from Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School in my riding of Sudbury will be heading to Ottawa for the Canada-Wide Science Fair to showcase their projects.

For over 55 years, Sudbury students in grades 7 to 12 have been showcasing science experiments, studies and innovative endeavours that have taken weeks and sometimes even months of effort to pull together.

I want to congratulate all participants of the 2024 Sudbury Regional Science Fair. I also want to extend a big congratulations to this year's winners: Benjamin Kawa, Felix Naghi, Eden Abols, Jack O'Connell, Violet Simon, Camille Landry and Xavier Simard.

I am wishing all of them the best of luck at the national competition. Go team Lo-Ellen.

* * *

● (1105)

RECYCLING

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, the science is in: What is terrible for one's pocketbook, for one's health and for the economy is paper straws. They suck, yet the radical Liberal government wants to force everyone to use them.

After nine long years of the Liberal government, it and the paper straws are not worth the cost. Everything is getting more expensive, while the Liberals focus on banning things that science shows are better for the environment, better for us and better for the economy.

Canada should be a superpower in plastics recycling, and we will be, just not under the current Prime Minister. Limp, wet and utterly useless, paper straws and Liberal governments are not worth the cost.

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NEPEAN NIGHTHAWKS

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Nepean Nighthawks Field Hockey Club is dedicated to fostering a love for field hockey among youth.

Statements by Members

Field hockey in Ottawa stretches back to the 1950s. A recent explosion of participation in the Ottawa region began in 2007. Interestingly, unlike globally, 70% of Ottawa members are female.

The Nepean Nighthawks' vision includes fostering sport participation for life. Their goals include reaching out to underserved communities in Ottawa and building a world-class field hockey complex to serve the local field hockey community. The club is particularly noted for its inclusive Stick Together program, which emphasizes teamwork, sportsmanship and the development of field hockey skills for all ages and skill levels.

The Nighthawks are committed to reconciliation, and they actively promote the participation of indigenous youth.

* * *

ORAL HEALTH MONTH

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, April is Oral Health Month in Canada, an opportunity to highlight good oral health as an essential component of overall health.

In Scarborough North, the Filipino-Canadian Dental Hygienists' Society has offered no-cost dental hygiene services to residents in need. Most recently, it partnered with the Filipino Centre Toronto and the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto to provide drop-in checkups and cleanings. When I visited its mobile dental clinic last Sunday, I was met by bright smiles, and I thanked the volunteer dentist and dental hygienists for their tireless efforts.

This month, the Canadian Dental Association reminds everyone to brush twice a day, floss daily, check for signs of gum disease and visit their dentist regularly. Now, with the new Canadian dental care plan, up to nine million people without coverage will soon have access to the dental care services they need.

* * *

MOOSE HIDE CAMPAIGN

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today and to recognize the work of my friend Barb Ward-Burkitt, who is the executive director of the Prince George Native Friendship Centre. I also recognize an incredible program that started in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George. What started as a small grassroots movement, a movement to end violence against women and children, has grown into an international inspiration supported by millions, spurred on by the incredible loss and sorrow of families of over 20 women and girls who have disappeared or who have been murdered on the infamous Highway 16, the Highway of Tears.

Statements by Members

Raven Lacerte and her father, Paul, have taken one single moose hide and turned it into an international movement, a movement that has spurred thousands of conversations, workshops, marches and meetings. Today I am extremely proud to honour Barb and the Moose Hide Campaign for their boundless efforts to end violence against indigenous women and girls. On April 30, Barb will be presented with the five millionth moose hide pin, in recognition of her tireless work.

I thank Barb and the Moose Hide Campaign.

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NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as this week has been National Volunteer Week, I would like to take a moment today to speak about the importance of volunteer work.

Each year, the Canada Revenue Agency congratulates and thanks volunteers from across the country, particularly because thousands of them actively help support free tax clinics under the community volunteer income tax program. Last year, these free tax clinics made it possible for almost 650,000 Canadians with a modest income to file their taxes and receive more than \$1.75 billion in benefits, credits and refunds. More than 3,400 community organizations, composed of more than 14,700 volunteers, contributed to achieving these results.

I would encourage all members to take a moment to thank all of the phenomenal volunteers and the program.

* * *

● (1110)

YUD ALEF NISSAN

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, Yud Alef Nissan is approaching, marking 122 years since the Lubavitcher Rebbe's light began to illuminate the world. The spiritual giant of the Jewish people, the Rebbe's teaching transcends borders and touches all of humanity. He was one of the most prolific thinkers in the recent history of Judaism, whose deep interpretation of Torah, Talmud, Halacha, Kabbalah, philosophy and Chasidus guides Jews and non-Jews everywhere.

In his teachings and his letters, every verse and story eternal to the Torah is as relevant today as it was when it was given at Sinai, and we find the answers to our most profound questions in them. Those teachings, with the daily help of Rabbi Kaplan of Thornhill, inspire me throughout my private and public life.

In the face of darkness, and there is a lot of darkness, we should remember the Rebbe's wisdom and his love for every Jew and every person. On this day, we are reminded to strengthen his call to bring light into the world, to participate, to share, to invest in education and to deepen the moral foundations through clarity and the existence of Jews everywhere.

CARBON TAX

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of this NDP-Liberal government, Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. The Liberal April Fool's Day joke was a 23% carbon tax increase. April Fool's Day jokes are supposed to last one day, but this one continues, fuelling high inflation.

In Ottawa, the Prime Minister's policies made the price of gas at the pumps jump by nearly 20¢ a litre, reaching its highest level since 2022. Still, the Liberals pretend their tax-and-spend policies are helping Canadians.

When will the government start helping people instead of hurting them? When will it do the right thing and pass Bill C-234 to axe the tax on farmers and food?

One thing we know for sure is that, as prices on everything continue to go up, driven by the costly carbon tax, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

* * *

[Translation]

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to make a solemn declaration about our duty to remember one of the darkest chapters in modern history, the Ottoman Empire's systematic destruction of a people during the Armenian genocide.

Let us take this moment to honour the memory of the 1.5 million innocent lives lost or destroyed just over a century ago. Let us remember that this happened to people who had been living in Anatolia for 1,500 years.

[English]

However, again, just a few months ago, after two millennia of existence, the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan basically ceased to exist. With Turkish military support and Russia's inaction as peacekeepers, Azerbaijan's military offensive ended with the region's 100,000 Armenians fleeing as refugees to Armenia.

Let us recognize the pain and suffering endured by the Armenian people and commit to never forgetting the Armenian genocide.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY IN CANADA

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, today I recognize the accomplishments of esteemed historian and Black Canadian heritage expert, Elise Harding-Davis.

Throughout her career, Elise elevated positive Black history in Canada, earning many accolades including the Order of Ontario designation, being named among the 100 Accomplished Black Canadian Women, and receiving the Ontario Black History Society's Daniel Hill Award, the Ontario Museum Association's Award of Excellence, Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal and the Ontario Historical Society's Carnochan Award.

For over 60 years, Elise has highlighted how African Canadians were essential to Canada's development and was the first Black female curator at the Amherstburg Freedom Museum.

Elise comes from a family of strong character. Her late sister, Shelley Harding-Smith, was Canada's first Black female master electrician and an activist, and was a friend and a mentor to me, personally. Their great-grandfather was a slave, and both Elise and Shelley progressed in a challenging world, where they let nothing stand in their way.

August 1 this year will mark the 190th anniversary of Emancipation Day, marking the day Canada's Slavery Abolition Act came into effect. Canada still needs to apologize for the enslavement of Black Canadians. An official apology would mean a lifetime of work recognized.

Elise exemplifies the true meaning of preserving Black history in Canada. Her legacy will no doubt inspire future generations.

* * *

● (1115)

[Translation]

EARTH DAY

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, next Monday is Earth Day, the world's largest environmental event. It is a day to raise awareness of environmental and climate issues. Let us remember a few facts. July 2023 was the hottest month in human history. Last month was the 18th consecutive month to set a heat record. Here in Quebec and Canada, unprecedented wildfires ravaged our forests and made the air in our cities the most polluted in the world last summer.

We are in the midst of a climate emergency and Canada's slowness in moving away from oil is a millstone around our neck. In that sense, anyone who calls themselves an environmentalist should support Quebec's independence. With our clean energy, we would finally be free to become an example to follow. We might even inspire our neighbour, Canada. As a woman who cares about our climate security and as a sovereignist, I am convinced that Quebec becoming a country would be good for everyone.

* * *

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, especially in British Columbia and the North Okanagan-Shuswap, Canadians are seeing that, after nine years, the Prime Minister and his NDP-Liberal government are simply not worth the cost.

Oral Questions

Their April 1 carbon tax increase of 23% has seen gas prices push past \$1.75 per litre in the interior and over the \$2 mark in other parts of B.C. The carbon tax only adds to the costs for farmers, who have no choice but to pay if they are to produce food for Canadian families. One chicken farmer in the Shuswap paid over \$100,000 last year alone, just for his carbon tax bill. Because of the NDP-Liberal government that carbon tax bill will increase another 23% this year, making it even more difficult for Canadian families to afford food.

Will the Prime Minister take the step to axe the tax on farmers and food by immediately passing Bill C-234 in its original form, or will he continue to prove that he and his NDP partners are simply not worth the cost?

* * *

BRUNSWICK FOUR

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today, I rise to commemorate the 50th anniversary of a significant moment in Canadian queer women's history, that of the Brunswick Four.

In 1974, Adrienne, Pat, Sue and Lamar were arrested for refusing to leave the Brunswick House, a popular Toronto bar, after they had taken to the stage to sing the song *I Enjoy Being a Dyke* during an amateur performance night. They returned as an act of defiance but were met with violence at the hands of police and charged. They were dubbed the "Brunswick Four", and a legal defence fund was set up in their name. At trial, all charges were dismissed except one for disturbing the peace.

Long subjected to police harassment, the Brunswick Four became a symbol of resistance for the gay and lesbian community. Their determination to combat systemic prejudice serves as an inspiration, especially in the fight for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, another day and there is more evidence to show the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

Former bank governor and proud Liberal, David Dodge, says the new federal budget is certainly not helpful in dealing with the inflationary fire, making it harder for Canadian families to afford anything. Young people are saddled with the Prime Minister's addiction to spending. The call is coming from inside the Liberal house.

Will the Prime Minister listen to experts, to business leaders, to his own party and millions of Canadians struggling to get by, and just stop the spending?

Oral Questions

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have the lowest debt and deficit in the G7, a AAA credit rating and a budget that presents a message of fairness for this country, for current and future generations. It is a vision the Conservatives would cut. Before even reading the budget, they already said they would not support it. It is a budget that supports child care and pharmacare and the understanding that Canadians have to have dental care in this country. Canadians who cannot otherwise afford it will have the support of the government. More homes will be built. These things are vital in this country, and the Conservatives are standing against every single one of them.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the problem is that nobody believes the Liberals anymore, and the budget is the opposite of fair. It is unfair to saddle our kids with billions of dollars of debt that they will be paying for years. It is unfair to force the inflationary spending on to the grocery bills of every single family. It is unfair to keep interest rates high, while millions struggle to pay their mortgages. The number of Canadians who cannot afford to pay their bills has more than doubled over the last month.

Will the Liberals finally fix the budget so Canadians can keep their homes, put gas in their cars and put food on their tables?

• (1120)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservative Party seem to be good at posing for photo ops and pretending to care about people in food bank lineups, while our government has introduced the most comprehensive package of competition reforms in Canadian history to increase competition and bring down grocery prices.

How cruel and heartless do people have to be, as a party, to vote against feeding kids in schools? The party over there has already voted against a national school food program once. We have introduced it in budget 2024, and we are going to see them vote—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Thornhill.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, mirror, mirror on the wall; that is all I hear from the member. The spending spree is not just limited to the costly government photo ops that he is talking about. He has been here for nine years. The Liberal insiders and elites are the ones getting in on the action too.

We learned this week that the RCMP raided the home of a guy who gifted taxpayers out of \$20 million for the arrive scam app. The Prime Minister failed to get the money back. The House ordered it.

Will someone over there tell their boss to get the cash back?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I said yesterday in the House, our government takes the use of taxpayers' money extremely seriously. We welcome the in-

vestigations that are taking place, including by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It is well known that it publicly raided a residence earlier this week.

We have said that anybody who abuses taxpayers' money will face the consequences. Of course we will seek to recuperate all money that has been misallocated.

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[Translation]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of this Prime Minister, who is not worth the cost, farmers are making an impassioned plea. This morning, they are protesting in large numbers in Beauce to show their anger at a government that is completely out of touch with reality.

Our farmers are being asked to fill our pantries while the Bloc-Liberal coalition is preventing the passage of Bill C-234, which would remove the carbon tax on the propane and natural gas needed to heat buildings and dry grain in order to bring down the cost of food.

Will the Prime Minister and the Bloc Québécois show some common sense and agree to this demand from Canadian farmers?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it odd that a member from Quebec is asking a question about Bill C-234, because it will not apply in Quebec.

Perhaps he should talk to his colleagues. The Conservatives had a chance to make Bill C-234 a priority for next week. What did they do? They traded two bills, and Bill C-234 is not one of them.

It is important to walk the talk. The member needs to convince his colleagues to introduce Bill C-234. The House needs to vote on it, once and for all.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, speaking of people who are out of touch, they are providing a very clear illustration of that this morning.

I invite the government and the Bloc Québécois to go to Beauce today to tell the farmers that the carbon tax has no impact in Quebec. I have room in my car if they want to get in after question period.

If there is no farming, then there is no food. That is something that the Bloc-Liberal coalition does not understand. The Bloc Québécois wants to radically increase the carbon tax again, proving once more that it is costly to vote for the Bloc Québécois.

Will the government take action and pass Bill C-234 in its original form?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not know why a member from Quebec is asking that question. The carbon tax has no impact on Quebec. I am pleased that a member from Ontario can tell him so.

In the meantime, I hope he will lobby his colleagues who are responsible for introducing Bill C-234. The Conservatives had the chance to do it when we come back, but they traded two bills and Bill C-234 was not one of them.

It is not my fault or the government's fault. It is their fault.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, yesterday my colleague from Drummond read page 74 of the 2024 budget to the minister. The title of that section is “Halal Mortgages”.

The minister replied that her government just wants to see if there is something that needs to be done. She said it is a private initiative, not a government program. In short, there is some unease.

If they do not know what direction they are taking with Halal mortgages, if it is not a government responsibility and if they want to create a framework for this measure rather than expand it, why is it included in the budget?

• (1125)

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, secularism does not mean exclusion, and that is why we really need to make sure that we protect Canadians with products that already exist within our financial institutions, in private companies. That is why the government has now announced that it will consult with financial service providers and diverse communities to understand how federal policies can protect Canadians from abuses. I hope that all parties across the aisle can get on board with this to make sure that Canadians are protected in these financial and economic times.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, we may have a piece of the answer. Over the past few months, the media have been reporting that members of the Muslim community are dissatisfied with some of the Liberal government's actions.

According to Radio-Canada, a Muslim group was even threatening to cut off its \$680,000 contribution to the Liberal Party. It would be quite something if they went to the NDP and the Conservatives. The Liberal solution, as always, is to propose a tailored solution to keep them happy.

Is including halal mortgages in the budget an olive branch extended to a fringe component of the Muslim community?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think the Bloc Québécois is losing it a little. The Bloc members do not know which way to turn. They do not want to talk about the budget, essentially because it provides money for housing, and that is good for Quebec. It provides money for seniors, and

Oral Questions

that is good for Quebec. It provides money for a bunch of things that are really important to all Quebecers.

They do not want to talk about it too much because they know it is good for Quebecers, but not good for the Bloc Québécois.

* * *

[English]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, pay the bills or buy the groceries; this is the dilemma for too many Canadians.

Big oil and gas are doing just fine by gouging Canadians at the pumps and making record profits. Why is this? It is because the government lets them. Liberals caved to lobbyists and stepped back instead of making big oil pay what it owes. We cannot expect better from Conservatives, because they are focused on taking Canadians' dental care and free medication.

Why is the government letting ultrarich CEOs rip off Canadians?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, by eliminating inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and introducing a tax on share buybacks, the government has presented a vision that says to the corporate sector and to the oil and gas sector that they have responsibilities from a tax perspective. There are other examples I could give.

What do we see? We see revenue generated that goes towards funding vital programs in this country that ensure a fairness vision. That vision translates to child care, pharmacare and a national child school food program, among other things.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals are so out of touch.

Just as New Democrats have delivered social programs to help Canadians, the Conservatives are already campaigning to cut dental care and pharmacare. It is absolutely shameful. People are drowning in debt just to keep up while corporations are swimming in record profits.

Neither Liberals nor Conservatives have the courage to challenge the status quo, because it benefits them and their insider crony friends. New Democrats want to tackle corporate greed. Why will the Liberal government not do so?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member for South Shore—St. Margarets has a habit of heckling and raising his voice when he is not supposed to. I would ask him to please refrain from doing so.

Oral Questions

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is very interesting. I have heard the member for a number of years talk about the issues he raised but also about a vision for the environment. I am wondering where exactly the NDP is on these things.

Carbon pricing is vital to this country's future. It really reflects an approach of responsibility from an environmental policy perspective that I thought New Democrats stood for, but they are wavered and flip-flopping. I sympathize, as others do, with them. It is a very difficult time. They have tough decisions to make, but I hope they end up on the right side of history with this issue; I really do.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, gas prices are the highest they have been in years. In my Ontario community, prices are as high as \$1.80 a litre. Sadly, the Prime Minister gave no relief to Canadians and increased the carbon tax by 23%. What is worse is that, when the carbon tax quadruples, it will add 61¢ to the price of a litre of gas. It is clear the Prime Minister is not worth the cost as Canadians work twice as hard to take in half as much.

When will the Prime Minister axe the tax so Canadians can afford to get to work, get groceries and take their kids to practice?

• (1130)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what is baffling when listening to the members opposite is that they are not listening to economists from across this country. Last week it was about 200 economists, and now it is over 350 economists who have written an open letter to us saying specifically that most families receive more in rebates than they pay in carbon pricing. In other words, the policy is designed to ensure it does not raise the cost of living for most Canadians and, they say, climate change, on the other hand, poses a real threat to Canadians' economic well-being.

I am going to listen to the economists.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the economists and the experts I listen to are the people in my riding paying \$1.80 a litre for gasoline now. The Prime Minister could reduce the price of a litre of gas by 20¢ right now by axing the carbon tax.

The Liberals have out-of-control spending and Canadians are broke. Rent and mortgages are doubling. Inflation is through the roof. We spend more money to service the debt than we do in transfers to the provinces on health care. Canadians are tapped out. They are saying there is no relief from the government.

When will the Prime Minister do the right thing and call a carbon tax election?

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let us listen to another expert.

The former Conservative prime minister of the U.K., Boris Johnson, came to Canada to teach the Conservative Party a lesson about the dangers of climate change denial nonsense. He said, "voters...continue to care deeply about the environment, and they want solutions that are going to be cost effective." We agree. Both the PBO and over 350 economists agree that, with the carbon pricing rebates, eight out of 10 will be better off.

The Conservatives' only plan is to let the planet burn. Their chief insult—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. When the hon. member asks a question, he should listen to the answer. He should not be heckling. Some of his colleagues were heckling as well. I would ask members to please tone it down and listen to the questions and answers that are being posed.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years, Canada's emissions are rising and the Liberal carbon tax is making life unaffordable. On April 1, the NDP-Liberals increased the carbon tax and across the country today, Canadians are paying way more at the pumps. Many Canadians who have been struggling to pay their bills throughout the cold and dark winter who might have been planning a summer road trip might not be able to afford it now.

Why are the NDP-Liberals giving Canadians a cruel summer instead of axing the tax?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important that we be clear. Under the previous Conservative government, emissions were on the way up with no plan to bring them down. We are on track to meet our 2026 targets. We are on track to meet the Paris targets. We are taking the action needed to reduce emissions.

However, more than that, if we are going to talk about affordability, let us talk about an economist from Calgary, who said, "carbon pricing is definitively not to blame for affordability challenges." Again, I am going to listen to the economists.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I choose to listen to the people in my riding who are paying 20¢ more a litre because of the NDP-Liberal carbon tax.

An inconvenient truth for the Liberals is that the only time that emissions went down in Canada was under Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government. In fact, if they want to listen to someone, they should listen to a fellow Liberal, the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, who, after losing a by-election, said the carbon tax is wrong.

Tens of millions of Canadians agree. These are the people we listen to. Why do the NDP-Liberals not?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the member opposite is concerned about the price of gas in Alberta, she may want to speak to the premier, who, on April 1, increased the Alberta gas tax. By the way, that is not connected to a rebate. The federal carbon price backstop pays more to eight out of 10 Canadians than they actually pay in carbon pricing, but the premier's gas tax was just an add-on.

FINANCE

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, the finance minister used a metric of 40% debt to GDP just last year as an anchor, which she has now cut loose. With \$40 billion more debt last year, \$40 billion more debt projected for this fiscal year and a \$40-billion debt projected for the following fiscal year. I sense a pattern. After nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, Canadians are being asked to hold the line at 40-something, but there is no real plan for that.

Will the Prime Minister tell Canadians under 40 how much of their future he has blown?

• (1135)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite is a graduate of the Ivey school of business in my riding. He knows economics, so he knows, of course, that Canada has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7 and that the debt-to-GDP ratio is set to continue to come down.

What he is really saying by raising these issues is that they do not stand in favour of a vision of fairness for this country, one of child care, pharmacare, dental care and building more homes. The national school food program that my colleague mentioned before is also vital to that vision. They stand against all of it.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, it appears that member did not get the memo about what is causing inflation in Canada. It is actually deficits. The Bank of Canada governor said so. The interest cost to service Canada's growing debt has risen to over \$54 billion, doubling in the last few years. It is now more than what we spend on health care. This is a cascade of debt obligations and there is no plan to reverse it. The NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost.

Will the Prime Minister advise why he is continuing on a fiscal course that will saddle young Canadians with sky-high debt for years?

Oral Questions

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have to really question the member's understanding of economics. I thought he knew, but I am wondering now. Inflation is a global phenomenon and in Canada, in fact, it is declining.

What is the member going to do when it comes to voting on the budget? Is he going to stand and declare an intention to support child care in this country, to make sure that we have a vision of fairness so that kids can go to school with their bellies full, so that we can have dental care in this country, pharmacare and all those things? He is against it.

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, in their budget, the Liberals like to illustrate their measures with tangible examples of fictitious citizens. Let us give them a dose of their own medicine so that they can understand what seniors are going through.

Rose is 72 and is hard hit by inflation. She cannot afford groceries anymore and cannot drive places because of the price of gas. Her taxes skyrocketed after the latest property assessment because of the real estate bubble.

If she were 75, she would receive nearly \$1,000 more in old age security, but, since she is 72, she gets nothing.

Why have the Liberals abandoned her?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our seniors are absolutely a priority for the Government of Canada. We have made extremely significant investments for them.

I have a question for my colleague. Since housing is a priority for Quebeckers, since home ownership is a priority for Quebeckers, since fighting climate change is a priority for Quebeckers, since the electrification of vehicles is a priority for Quebeckers, and since economic growth is a priority for Quebeckers, then why is he going to vote against all that?

HOUSING

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, there is not a penny more for seniors in the budget.

Oral Questions

Let us talk about housing. Imagine a Quebecker who is looking for a one-bedroom apartment in July but cannot afford the \$1,600 in rent. He does not have access to affordable housing because the federal government has invested only 6% of the money in Quebec. He sees in the budget that the federal government is putting off 96% of its investments in apartment construction and 91% of its investments in housing infrastructure until after the election. It will be years before he sees the impact of the budget measures, and that is only if the Conservatives do not scrap them.

Why not allocate that money now?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am looking at everything that is being done in housing, for example, building new housing, accelerating housing construction, protecting affordable housing and helping young families in need, in other words young couples with or without children, to become homeowners.

The members of the Bloc Québécois are saying that this is important, but they are voting against these measures. They are being swallowed up by the Conservatives. The Conservatives have so much influence over the Bloc Québécois that the Bloc keeps voting with them. That is shameful.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberal government has hit Canadians with another carbon tax increase of 23%. Grocery prices are climbing, making families choose between heating and eating.

Conservatives tried to ease this burden by passing Bill C-234, which axes the tax on farmers. However, this week, the Liberals blocked it. They are hell-bent on making life more expensive. If they are so confident in their costly plan, will they let Canadians decide and call for a carbon tax election?

• (1140)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to be clear about the affordability piece to the way the carbon price works. It is a carbon price and a carbon rebate. I believe that the members opposite should be very clear with their constituents about whether they are asking for the carbon rebates to not land in their bank accounts.

Again, going back to what the economists state, an economist reviewed the carbon pricing and rebate system and said that they estimate that the medium annual net cost of carbon taxes for households in Ontario in 2023 was negative, meaning that most households received \$300 more in rebates than they paid in carbon taxes.

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FINANCE

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, it spends more servicing the national debt than on health care. After nine years of

the NDP-Liberal government, Canadian soldiers eat at food banks and veterans are living in their cars. After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, seniors cannot afford to eat and they cannot afford to heat.

After nine years, despite deficit after deficit and record debt, the problems are getting worse. Canadians know the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. When will the NDP-Liberal government admit it has a spending problem, not a revenue problem?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that is a bit rich coming from the party opposite. Let us take a walk down memory lane.

When the Conservative Party of Canada was in government under Stephen Harper, let us see what the Conservatives did to veterans. They slashed the veterans affairs budget. They closed nine veterans affairs offices, and they cut the workforce by 1,000, individuals who provided direct services to veterans.

We will take no lessons from the Conservative Party of Canada.

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, after the release of the tax-and-spend budget this week, everyone knows that the NDP-Liberal government, after nine long years, and the Prime Minister are just not worth the cost.

Bill C-234 was to provide some desperately needed relief for our farmers who produce food for Canadians. That bill passed this chamber. Then the Prime Minister bullied the senators into gutting that bill and leaving Canadians with higher costs.

When will the Prime Minister call for a vote on the original bill or call a carbon tax election?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if Bill C-234 was so important in the Senate, then why did five members of their own caucus not show up to vote?

By the way, Conservatives had the opportunity to debate Bill C-234 when it came back to the House, when we come back in one week. They traded two private members' bills. One was not Bill C-234. If it is so important, I would advise my colleague to lobby his colleagues and stop politicizing this issue.

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of this Liberal government and its inflationary policies, everything costs more, everything costs too much. Interest rates have tripled. Gasoline costs over \$1.90 a litre. Groceries are unaffordable. Canadians are going hungry because housing is too expensive now. The Canadian dream of home ownership is now beyond the reach of a hard-working generation of young adults.

Will this inflationary government implement a policy of matching every dollar of new program spending with a dollar of savings?

[English]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, while we work hard every day to deliver for Canadians, Conservatives pretend to care. They have already said they will vote against the budget this year.

How cruel and heartless do they have to be to vote against feeding hungry kids or giving seniors the dental coverage they need to get their teeth fixed or supporting people with disabilities with hundreds of dollars, tax-free, more per month or building more child care spaces so parents can get back to work or providing insulin to people living with diabetes? They cannot vote against those things if they actually care. Conservatives do not care.

* * *

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals should never have bought the Trans Mountain pipeline. It threatens our climate and our coasts. Canadian taxpayers are now on the hook for the government's irresponsible spending to the tune of \$35 billion. Liberals ignored the calls from environmentalists and coastal indigenous nations, instead choosing to be in the pocket of big oil and gas.

Why does the government keep backing big polluters when it knows this pipeline is an environmental and economic disaster?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if Canada is to succeed, we know we have to get our resources to market. That is why the TMX pipeline is so important.

The member knows, or ought to know, that the government does not intend to be the long-term owner of the project. A divestment process will be initiated once the project is more advanced, de-risked and, essentially, when consultations with indigenous peoples are completed. This is the vision that we have always laid out, and it is one that we will stick to.

* * *

● (1145)

HOUSING

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, in their budget on Thursday, the Liberals made a lot of announcements on housing,

Oral Questions

but they did not make the \$600-million investment in the territories that Nunavut, Northwest Territories and the Yukon have been desperately asking for. When I go home, I am told more heartbreaking stories of crumbling and overcrowded homes.

Why will the minister not listen to the territorial premiers and give them the funding they need to address the housing crisis?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs and to the Minister of National Defence (Northern Defence), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question. She has been a strong advocate on housing across the Arctic and northern regions.

We are the first government, ever, in history to have direct agreements with indigenous governments to address their housing needs. We have invested billions of dollars, over \$3 billion in fact, in housing across the territories, in a number of ways, to help increase the housing and to ensure that people have housing that is affordable to them.

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, climate change means more flooding events of increasing intensity and severity. Homeowners in areas prone to flooding, like those in parts of Pierrefonds, in my riding, who were hit by flooding in 2017 and in 2019, worry about the rising cost of flood insurance, and that is if they are lucky enough to remain eligible for flood insurance coverage.

Can the Minister of Emergency Preparedness tell the House how this week's budget is coming to the aid of climate-vulnerable homeowners?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his very strong advocacy on flood protection.

We know of the devastating impacts that climate change is having on Canadians. Insurance companies are paying out billions of dollars, and those costs are being passed on to Canadians, making it even more expensive to own homes. With budget 2024, we are increasing our investments on a national, low-cost, flood insurance program. Over the next year, we will work with the provinces and territories to put this program in place.

We will be there for Canadians when climate change impacts their lives.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, this week, the RCMP raided the home of the Prime Minister's top arrive scammer, Kristian Firth. The raid is connected to a proposal that Firth's GC Strategies sent to the Deputy Prime Minister and her former chief of staff Jeremy Broadhurst.

What communications did the Deputy Prime Minister and her office have with GC Strategies regarding a proposal that has led to an RCMP raid?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, just because my colleague on the other side of the aisle repeats something does not necessarily attach it to the facts. The facts in this case are well known.

One thing he said that is entirely factual is that the RCMP is looking into this matter. That is why I would urge people to be careful before they invent and ascribe things to what is an ongoing police investigation. Our government has said that people have a responsibility to be judicious with taxpayers' money, and those who are not will face the consequences.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the two-person, basement company, GC Strategies received more than \$100 million from the Liberal-NDP government, including \$20 million for nothing on arrive scam. We know of a link between GC Strategies and the Deputy Prime Minister and her office regarding a proposal that has led to an RCMP raid.

Has the Deputy Prime Minister been contacted by the RCMP, and will she fully co-operate with the police investigation?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, again, my friend on the other side simply asserts a series of things that he knows very well are not accurate and attempts to connect a series of dots that simply cannot be connected. He should stick to the basic facts.

The RCMP, following information that was given to it by the Canada Border Services Agency, has decided to look into a series of allegations. It obviously takes its work very seriously, and we should allow Canada's national police force to do its work and to not simply make up stuff in the House of Commons besides the work it is doing.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost or the corruption.

The ArriveCAN app was originally supposed to cost \$80,000, only to skyrocket to \$60 million, triggering an RCMP investigation. The contractor admitted to the House that he does not feel ashamed, and the Liberals have not even asked him to repay the money.

When will the Prime Minister get Canadians their money back?

• (1150)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I had a chance earlier in today's question period to answer that question, and I am happy to do it again.

Our government has worked with the Auditor General's Office and with parliamentary committees. There is an internal investigation being conducted by the Border Services Agency. All these investigations will, unlike some of our friends on the other side, establish the facts of what happened.

Anybody who has misused taxpayers' money will be required to repay it, and anybody who has misused taxpayers' money will face the consequences. That is why we are pleased that the RCMP is looking into this matter.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, this app went live four years ago in the early days of the pandemic, and it has been the subject of questioning and scrutiny ever since.

While Canadians were losing their businesses and being told by the Prime Minister that we were all in this together, insiders at GC Strategies were milking taxpayers for millions of dollars.

When will the Prime Minister get taxpayers their money back on the arrive scam?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have said, continually, and we will say it again, if people have misused taxpayers' money or have misappropriated public funds, of course efforts will be undertaken to recuperate that money. That is what a responsible government does. However, a responsible government allows the internal reviews and audits, which are under way, to determine exactly what money might be subject to the reimbursement and what the appropriate process is to have that money reimbursed. At the same time, the RCMP is also looking into this matter.

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[Translation]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, on Thursday morning, gas prices jumped by 15¢ a litre in one fell swoop. That is highway robbery.

The carbon tax is not the culprit. It does not apply in Quebec. It did not even budge Thursday morning. No, the blame lies at the feet of greedy oil and gas companies getting ready for summer by bleeding everyone dry. Those same oil and gas companies, Suncor and CNRL, earned \$8 billion in profits last year.

The Liberals, however, are subsidizing oil and gas companies to the tune of \$83 billion over 10 years, in addition to having bought them a \$34-billion pipeline.

Is it not time to cut them off?

Oral Questions

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the oil and gas sector must pay its fair share. The sector is making record profits and needs to invest in reducing emissions. We have eliminated inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and are asking the wealthiest 1.1% to pay a little more.

The Conservatives oppose our cap on oil and gas emissions. The Conservatives take their orders from the oil and gas sector.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, one of these days, the government will need to explain what an efficient oil subsidy is.

It is funny, though. The carbon tax, which does not apply in Quebec, has a 0.15% impact on inflation, and yet the Conservatives get all worked up about it every day in Parliament. Meanwhile, when the price of gas goes up by 15¢ a litre, we do not hear a peep from them.

There is a code of silence when oil companies pick taxpayers' pockets, just as there is a code of silence when we ask the government to stop subsidizing oil companies.

Does the government think it is okay to subsidize companies to the hilt, only for them to turn around and raise prices to make more and more profit?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am so pleased to hear the Bloc Québécois say something that is completely true: The federal carbon tax does not apply in Quebec. The Bloc Québécois should talk to the Conservatives about this, because the Conservatives cannot seem to get that through their heads.

On this side of the House, we agree that all sectors of the economy must reduce their emissions. That includes oil and gas companies. We are doing the work to make sure that happens.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, at a time when Canadians are struggling to put food on the table, the Prime Minister's ArriveCAN app has made multimillionaires out of the owners of GC Strategies. This week, Canadians could have finally had some answers about ArriveCAN, but the Prime Minister chose to demand silence on the issue and ignore Canadians' questions. We are talking about \$60 million taken away from Canadians and put into the pockets of multimillionaires.

Will the Prime Minister give Canadians back the money they lost with ArriveCAN?

• (1155)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague knows very well that the idea that the government has not been transparent is untrue. I know he wants to repeat that, but he knows very well that it not the case.

We have worked with parliamentary committees. We have worked with the Auditor General. We completely agree with the idea that all those who have obtained taxpayers' money in an inappropriate way should be required to pay it back. Of course, as my colleague well knows, the RCMP is also investigating this situation.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians work all the time, with nothing to show for their labour and efforts, while the consultants and contractors involved in the ArriveCAN disaster got \$60 million from the Prime Minister. That \$60 million comes from Canadian taxpayers. It is their money and it was wasted. It was a gift that was handed over in return for no work. Canadians have one simple question, and it demands a simple answer.

When are taxpayers going to get their money back?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, allow me to repeat what I said in English a moment ago: My colleague knows that an internal investigation is being conducted by the Canada Border Services Agency. Its purpose is precisely to determine the amounts of money that may have been misused. We have to wait for the facts before demanding repayments. We fully understand and share Canadians' concern about the importance of treating taxpayers' money properly. That is exactly what is going to happen.

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister's arrive scam app was supposed to cost \$80,000. The Prime Minister chose the app, mandated its use and, along with the NDP, voted for \$60 million to fund it. Shady contractors got rich without doing any IT work, while the app itself failed and erroneously sent tens of thousands of Canadians into quarantine. The RCMP is knocking. The main contractors got \$20 million.

When will the Prime Minister get Canadians their money back?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the same question begets the same answer. We have said from the beginning that the government has welcomed the scrutiny of parliamentary committees. We have worked with the Auditor General and have implemented her recommendations. My colleague, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, has changed the way that these contracts are awarded and the oversight provisions.

We will continue to do what is necessary to ensure taxpayers' money is well spent, and we will continue to obviously hold those to account who do not follow the rules.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our veterans and their families have sacrificed so much for our country. We have a solemn and sacred duty to support our veterans, who have served courageously and honourably. We know how hard it can be for a veteran transitioning to civilian life to find a doctor. When veterans were active members in the Canadian Armed Forces, they received health care directly from the forces.

Can the Minister of Veterans Affairs tell us how she will help veterans and their families access these services?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my friend and colleague for her important question and for her hard work on behalf of veterans in her community.

Budget 2024 increases our support for veterans and their families. Telemedicine services are available across the country for veterans and their families. That is one of the important measures for veterans in this new budget. The pilot project has been successful, and we know that expanding the telemedicine program will help improve access to health care during their transition period. Our government will always be there to support our veterans and their families.

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*[English]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canada has entered uncharted territory. The government has made Canada a candy store for car thieves, and under its watch, organized crime has made Canada a key exporter of deadly fentanyl.

Canadians, and now the whole world, know that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. The NDP-Liberal government must take responsibility for this failure, which has brought crime, chaos and corruption not only to Canadian streets, but also to the streets of the whole world.

Is there a Liberal Party leadership candidate who can rise and tell us who has been running this place for the past nine years so that we can hold them to account?

● (1200)

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, fearmongering does nothing to encourage Canadians to have more confidence in our justice system. We have one of the safest countries in the entire world.

We had an auto summit just a few short months ago, where all of the different parties came together. Since that time, we have seen an increase in the measures taken by police and other authorities across the country, including the federal government. Car theft is going down and the recovery of stolen cars is going up. These mea-

sures continue to work, and we will continue to work with other levels of government and other necessary authorities.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, this Liberal government has been in power for nine years. We already know, but it bears repeating: It is not worth the cost.

In Montreal, it is the wild west. Criminals do not respect authority. On Wednesday, car thieves, behind the wheel of their stolen car, crashed into highway patrol. Is that normal in a civilized country like Canada? Will the Prime Minister of the Liberal-Bloc coalition end his soft-on-crime policies and throw repeat car thieves in jail?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there was a lot of good news in the budget, as the House knows. Some of the good news is that the government and my colleague the Minister of Justice are committed to making changes to the Criminal Code, specifically to target those who steal cars, as my colleague described so well.

We are having meetings and discussions with our key partners to prevent car theft. We will continue to do whatever is necessary in this case.

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*[English]***MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS**

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, since 2016, over 40,000 Canadians have died from overdoses. Over a billion dollars has been spent, with zero results. B.C.'s deputy commissioner of the RCMP has confirmed that organized crime is indeed trafficking safe supply. It is going straight from the pharmacy to the hands of criminals, unleashing crime, chaos and disorder in our communities.

After nine years of the Prime Minister and his NDP servants, Canadians are finding out they are not worth the cost. When will the minister of safe supply take responsibility for her failed drug policies and put an end to taxpayer-funded drug policies?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we need all partners working together to address the illegal toxic drug supply in our communities. We have and we will continue to support provinces and territories, so that they can deliver the full suite of resources that are needed. Our government will use every tool at our disposal to end this national public health crisis.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada's support for Ukraine has been unwavering. Unlike the Conservative Party opposite, which has voted against Ukraine multiple times now, we are stepping up our support through budget 2024.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development please tell the House about the important news for Ukraine through the latest budget?

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government has been there since day one for Ukraine. Budget 2024 is yet another step in making sure that Ukraine wins in its fight against Putin's illegal invasion.

This budget includes almost \$3 billion in additional financing, including for lethal and non-lethal weapons, including funding through the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for the reconstruction of Ukraine. We will also see how we can use seized Russian assets for the restoration of Ukraine. We have always been there to support Ukraine.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, the NDP successfully fought against cuts to indigenous services, but it is clear the Liberals still do not get it. Let us look at housing and infrastructure, where the Liberals spent less than 1% of what first nations need. First nations here in Manitoba face a serious infrastructure crisis, but the government still delays helping them, preferring to pat itself on the back for just not being Conservatives.

Will the Liberals commit to partnering with Manitoba first nations to build the infrastructure they desperately need, including the airport in Wasagamack and the desperately needed east side all-weather road?

• (1205)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her ongoing advocacy.

Since 2015, we have increased spending on indigenous priorities by 180%. That is right. That is the abysmal state in which we received this file in 2015 from the previous Harper Conservatives, who gave zero cares about the lives of indigenous people.

In fact, budget 2024 dedicates over \$9.5 billion to indigenous priorities. A full 25% of the budget goes toward indigenous priorities in this country. We will continue on the path of reconciliation together.

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OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, in the midst of a climate crisis, the oil and gas industry raked in \$38

Points of Order

billion in pure profit in 2022 by gouging Canadians at the pumps, fuelling inflation. Despite claims of fairness in this year's budget, we learned this week that big oil's lobbyists convinced this government to shelve an excess profit tax on these record-breaking profits, which could have generated \$4.2 billion to help make life more affordable for regular Canadians.

Can anyone in this government justify to Canadians what is fair about this?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would remind the member of what I said earlier when the NDP posed the question on this issue.

We are eliminating inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and introducing a tax on share buybacks. In addition, there are changes to the capital gains that will benefit, on the whole, the vast majority of small businesses in this country. Decreasing the inclusion rate and increasing the lifetime capital gains exemption means that it is the largest corporations that will be asked to pay more to ensure a greater vision of fairness in the country.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM IN THE HOUSE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I understand that, over the constituency week, the Speaker has indicated that he is going to be reviewing some of the things that have been said in the House to further improve decorum here. I would like to contribute to the reflection that he will be doing, and I will reference Standing Order 18 specifically.

Standing Order 18 says that:

No member shall speak disrespectfully of the Sovereign, nor of any of the royal family, nor of the Governor General or the person administering the Government of Canada; nor use offensive words against either House, or against any member thereof. No member may reflect upon any vote....

My point is that, today, during question period, the member for Regina—Wascana referred to the Prime Minister as “corrupt” and to the government as “corrupt”. Although he did it today, it has been done a number of times in the House. I would say that terminology specifically goes against Standing Order 18. I would encourage the Chair, during this time of reflection over that week that he indicated he was going to do that, to consider my comment on this and to weigh into whether or not this is actually—

Some hon. members: Debate.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, they keep yelling “debate”. This is one of the few times I am actually rising on a point of order that is actually is a point of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Yes, it is a point of order on information that is to be provided to the Speaker.

Points of Order

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would ask that you reflect on and include in your deliberations and reporting back to the House whether or not the word “corrupt” in reference to an individual or the government is appropriate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is taken up.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—University on a point of order.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, if you ask the Ethics Commissioner about all of the infractions that the Prime Minister has been charged and convicted with on corruption, you will find the truth to be that this is a corrupt government and Prime Minister.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate.

The hon. member was rising to provide a specific word to the Speaker.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Drummond is also rising on a point of order.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to build on what my colleague just said. I actually raised a point of order about this yesterday with the Speaker, who was in the chair at the time, to ask him to once again set out strict rules and clear guidelines for members to follow. That would help us to better understand how far we can go. Right now and for the past few months, there has been a lack of consistency in the way freedom of expression is interpreted in the House and in the way measures are applied when members cross the line or do not follow the guidelines, which, again, are not exactly clear.

I want to take this opportunity to reiterate my request that the Chair come back after the parliamentary recess with a clearer game plan, with guidelines, so that we know what the limits are and we have a better idea of what we can and cannot say.

• (1210)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to stress that the decisions that the Speaker will have to make in the next few days need to include, as the Conservatives raised yesterday, the use of false titles.

We have the Conservatives repeatedly using, during question period, false titles. They talk in English about an NDP-Liberal government, and they talk in French about a Bloc-Liberal government. This is false, and it is misleading using false titles. It is something that was very much not permitted during the Harper government in the House of Commons and should not be permitted now.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): On another point of order, the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Madam Speaker, I would like to add that, as you move forward in your deliberations on this, given we had a historic event happen earlier this week with historic corruption once again in this country, combined with the numerous ethics violations, “corruption” is the appropriate word for the Prime Minister.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I think that is more of a point of debate. I want to remind members that, if they are raising points of order, it should actually be a point of order and not debate.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin is also rising on a point of order.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, as I am listening to this, today in question period we heard Liberal members repeatedly refer to Conservative members of Parliament as “mean” and “cruel”. If we are going to go down this road, I am sure we could scour the record of the member for Kingston and the Islands for all sorts of language that he has used that we might not agree with.

I would just urge the Chair, as the office is deliberating on this list, that the list of things we cannot say in the House of Commons be as short as possible and that we have latitude to engage in our democracy freely and passionately on behalf of our constituents. I am concerned that we are going down a road where we have way too many things that we are not able to talk about freely, and I do not think that our democracy is helped by that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate that point of order as well. I do appreciate all that was contributed today. We will certainly take it all under advisement.

The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of clarification.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs and to the Minister of National Defence (Northern Defence), Lib.): Madam Speaker, in consideration of my response to the member for Nunavut during question period, I want to clarify for the record that we have invested close to \$1.2 billion across the three territories in housing and have supported over 18,000 units. In budget 2024, we would be investing an additional \$918 million in housing in the territories.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and in accordance with the policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Agreement between the United Nations as Represented by the United Nations Environment Programme and the Government of Canada Regarding the Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to Develop an International Legally Binding Instrument on Plastic Pollution, including in the Marine Environment (INC-4)”, done at Nairobi on April 4.

* * *

• (1215)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following two reports of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

The first is the 11th report, entitled “Bill C-26, An Act respecting cyber security, amending the Telecommunications Act and making consequential amendments to other Acts”. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

The second is the 12th report, which is in relation to the motion adopted on Monday, April 15, and it is entitled “Modification to the National Occupational Classification of Firefighters”. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the 12th report.

* * *

PETITIONS

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today to present a petition from Canadians and people from the Nipissing area who are concerned about upcoming changes in legislation related to medical assistance in dying, or MAID.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to reverse the law extending eligibility for MAID to people with mental illness as their sole medical condition.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today on behalf of petitioners in the riding of Perth—Wellington.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners request that the government institute a citizens' assembly on electoral reform.

U.K. PENSIONS IN CANADA

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to present a petition.

I want to first thank the Canadian Alliance of British Pensioners, in particular Ian Andexser, who is a constituent in my riding.

Over 113,000 British pensioners living in Canada are currently receiving a frozen U.K. pension. In the last two years, the U.K. state pension has increased 18.6% to keep up with inflation, yet British pensioners in Canada are receiving a 0% increase. Canada annually indexes the CPP for Canadians who live in the U.K., so there is no reciprocity. Recently, the U.K. sought the support of Canada to join the CPTPP, which was willing given, yet Canada has requested an end to this one-sided arrangement five times in the last 10 years.

Overall, the undersigned citizens and residents of Canada who receive a U.K. pension, or who will be eligible to draw a U.K. pension in the future, call upon the Government of Canada to seek a meeting with officials in the U.K. government to negotiate a stand-alone social security agreement to include the upgrading of U.K. pensions.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table petition e-4758.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada, particularly IRCC, to develop a list of laws that are known, in repressive regimes such as Russia, to be used to persecute human rights defenders, democracy activists and political dissidents. The petitioners are concerned that such laws, if they are deemed to have a Canadian equivalent, could be used to make someone inadmissible to Canada on the basis of a conviction just for defending human rights.

I would like to thank my constituent, Maria Kartasheva, who is a new Canadian citizen, for bringing forward this petition to make sure that what happened to her never happens to anyone else.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I bring forward a petition to the attention of the chamber. It has been spearheaded by the St. Michael's Catholic Women's League, based out of Ridgeway, though many other Canadians have signed it.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners want to draw attention to the fact that the depiction of sexual violence and access to it, particular for young people, is far too easy in this country. It is not protected by any effective age verification methods, so they want to make the House fully aware that this is an important health and public safety concern.

Therefore, they are encouraging us to adopt Bill S-210, which would protect young persons from exposure to pornography.

• (1220)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the petition I am tabling is for the Government of Canada to apologize to Black Canadians for its role in chattel enslavement in Canada. Specifically, four items are noted in the petition: first, chattel enslavement was initiated over 400 years ago to assemble a cheap, ready and usable workforce that was dehumanized and dispersed globally; second, in colonial Canada, King Louis XIV's Code Noir became law in 1743 and required both indigenous and Black slaves brought into the French colony to be considered the possessions of those who purchased them; third, Great Britain further supported the practice of chattel enslavement after the French in 1759; and fourth, following the Slavery Abolition Act of 1834, and after the Dominion of Canada was created in 1867, systemic racism continued, thereby perpetuating the practice of discriminating beliefs in societal institutions, organizations and legislation, which treated Black people as marginal and inferior.

Therefore, these petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to finally do the right thing and apologize to Black Canadians for the centuries of mistreatment and racism in Canada. I thank Elise Harding-Davis for bringing this petition forward.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just recently, WestJet announced new international flights, along with some domestic flights, one of which is direct to Ottawa, but it is encouraging when international airlines expand services, and that is what this petition is all about.

Petitioners are asking to have airlines take a look, along with the government, at ways in which we can enhance direct flight services to Europe, in particular to India. Ideally, we would speak to WestJet and others to encourage them to consider looking at those direct flights from Winnipeg to India.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to present a number of petitions on behalf of residents of the North Okanagan—Shuswap and other Canadians.

The first one states that, whereas Canadians with mental health issues should be provided with treatment and support, and mental illness can be complex and include suicidal thoughts and symptoms, the undersigned citizens and residents of Canada call upon the House of Commons to reverse the law extending eligibility for MAID to people with mental illness as their sole medical condition.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have is, again, signed by residents of North Okanagan—Shuswap and Canadians. It states that sexually explicit material, including demeaning material and material depicting sexual violence, can easily be accessed on the Internet by young persons. The petitioners, therefore, call upon the House of Commons to adopt Bill S-210 to protect young persons from exposure to pornography.

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final three petitions, and I have risen numerous times on this issue, are presented because people are concerned about the way the Liberal-NDP government has overreached into their lives, especially when it comes to access to natural health products. The petitioners call upon the Minister of Health to work with the natural health products industry and adjust Health Canada's cost revenue recovery rates to accurately reflect clear operations and be run smoothly.

ABORTION

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to present a petition with nearly 2,000 signatories, who are calling on the government to uphold and protect abortion rights in Canada.

Conservative members have presented anti-abortion legislation, and with the rise of anti-abortion legislation in the United States, Canadians must be vigilant in upholding this vital right. The lives of women and gender minorities rely on access to safe and legal abortions.

• (1225)

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also rise to present a paper petition that constituents have signed on the mistreatment and discrimination facing people who are experiencing homelessness and the unhoused population.

While government is funding NGOs, petitioners are calling for housing-first solutions and are concerned about the violence this population faces from police and other people with more power. The petitioners call on the House of Commons to implement a federal law against the discrimination of homeless people in Canada and to make it illegal to confiscate their property.

CANADIAN AIR TRANSPORT SECURITY AUTHORITY

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition with well over 500 signatures. The right to bargain is a constitutional right. The petitioners are calling on the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority to cease interfering with industrial relations and all contractors, to meet their duties as an employer and to reverse the decision by CATSA to disqualify 27 screening officers at the Victoria airport. These workers were unjustly terminated without due process. The petitioners are asking for justice.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. The first petition is on behalf of constituents who are calling to the attention of the government the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which has warned us repeatedly that rising temperatures over the next two decades will bring widespread devastation and extreme weather.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to move forward immediately with bold emissions caps for the oil and gas sector that are comprehensive in scope and realistic in achieving the necessary targets that Canada has set to reduce emissions by 2030.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am presenting today is from farmers primarily from the riding to the north of mine, which is Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston. They are bringing to the attention of the government that the abattoir that was located at the Joyceville Institution was shut down a number of months ago. As a result, there are no longer options to utilize an abattoir within the local area of Kingston. As such, these farmers have to bring their cattle to abattoirs that are a much further distance away.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to explore all options to ensure that the abattoir located at the Joyceville Institution is reopened to address the issues noted above.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling two petitions today on behalf of constituents in my riding.

The first petition calls on the federal government, which has already issued sanctions against the Russian Federation, to also name the Russian Federation as a foreign state supporting terrorism and to list it as a state sponsor of terror under specific legislation related to terrorism and the State Immunity Act.

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is very dear to my heart, because I am a member of the Calgary Co-op.

The Government of Canada has made illegal single-use plastics across the country as of December 2023, including the Calgary Co-op's 100% compostable shopping bags. This is despite the fact that the Calgary Co-op states that its bags contain no plastic, including no plastic in the ink, and that those non-plastic bags are engineered to break down at the local composting facility that the City of Cal-

Government Orders

gary owns within a 28-day time frame. There is no waste and no plastic.

The Calgary Co-op says that its bags are truly popular with its members and are often reused as bin liners for household organic waste, constituting a second use. The Calgary Co-op has successfully kept over 100 million plastic bags out of landfills with the use of its compostable shopping bags. It is also signalling to the Government of Canada that this is an unnecessary ban that sends signals to stifle the adoption and development of environmentally responsible products.

Therefore, the petitioners are asking that the Government of Canada recognize that compostable bags do not constitute single-use plastics and are therefore worthy of an exemption from this ban.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. 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, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to debate Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation. If enacted, this would ensure a non-partisan, arm's-length organization that would hold the government of the day to its commitments to reconciliation. This is needed, because the government shows less of a commitment to reconciliation every year. Let us look at the Liberal record.

Last year, not one Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendation was implemented. Out of the 94 calls to action, only 13 have been accomplished. The government promised to end long-term boil water advisories more than three years ago, but there is still no end in sight. This year is looking even worse.

What has happened with the government's most important relationship, we might ask? We can just look at this past week. The Minister of Finance could not even bring herself to utter the word "indigenous" or "reconciliation" in her speech introducing the budget. However, given her rhetoric over the last year, why would she?

Government Orders

Indigenous peoples spent months hearing the government threaten sunseting and cuts to the services that they and their communities rely on. Programs, services and grants that people rely on were threatened, including Jordan's principle and dealing with the harmful legacy of residential schools. It took NDP pressure to reverse many of those cuts.

This is how low the bar is set with the government, opposing cuts in the face of a \$350-billion infrastructure gap. Instead of proposing a wealth tax or an excess profit tax on people such as Mirko Bibic, Galen Weston or Arthur Irving, the government consciously chose to spend less than 1% of what is needed to end the housing crisis on first nations.

Despite all their bluster, big oil does not need to beg the government for handouts. Galen Weston certainly does not. Bell gets all the money it needs to give away in fat bonuses and shareholder dividends while laying off thousands of workers. However, first nations are treated as an afterthought in this budget. It really boggles the mind.

The government recently co-authored a report that made clear how badly federal governments, whether Liberal or Conservative, have just fundamentally failed first nations. If one doubled the number of homes in first nations communities, the report said, there would still not be enough to meet the housing demand. Upon releasing the report with the AFN, the Liberals decided to completely ignore it.

The Liberals know that they will not hit the 2030 goal to end the housing crisis for first nations. Their department officials have admitted as much, but the Liberal MPs will not admit it, nor will the ministers responsible or the Prime Minister.

Communities such as the ones here in northern Manitoba live this reality every day. They know it well. That is why Grand Chief Cathy Merrick said, in response to this budget, that it will be a cold day in hell before the infrastructure gap facing first nations is ended. That is why the AFN National Chief Woodhouse Nepinak is calling for a first ministers meeting this year to discuss a path forward on reconciliation, because the government is just not getting the work done.

Let us be honest about what a \$350-billion infrastructure gap looks like. There is Shamattawa First Nation, where the housing crisis is so bad, the community has had to deal with tuberculosis outbreaks. In fact, here in northern Manitoba, over the last number of years, we have had higher rates of tuberculosis than have some parts of sub-Saharan Africa. There is Tataskweyak Cree Nation, where the government so fundamentally failed in delivering clean water that it had to fight the first nation in court.

There is Pimicikamak Cree Nation, which has a 2,000-family wait-list for homes. There is also the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, which has a 700-family wait-list for homes.

There is Wasagamack, one of the most isolated communities in the country. It is still waiting for the federal government to step up and work with the community and the province to build a desperately needed airport.

Communities on the east side of Manitoba, on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, are paying the price for climate change. They have no choice but to rely on ice roads, which are increasingly unreliable because of the shortened winter season. They have made it clear to the federal government that they need all-weather roads but the federal government has made no commitment to working with them to help build the roads.

● (1230)

There is the Island Lake region, where the population is similar to that of my hometown of Thompson. Thousands of people live in the region; they still do not have a hospital or an all-weather road.

The housing infrastructure gap, which I would call a crisis, is pervasive in first nations here in Manitoba and for many first nations across the country. Communities need housing, elders' care homes, day cares, health centres, water treatment plants and emergency preparedness-related infrastructure. They need to improve existing roads and build new ones so they can fight to survive climate change.

Many of these stories are rooted here in my constituency in northern Manitoba, on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, but we know they are repeated across the country. Indigenous peoples are almost three times more likely to live in a home in need of major repair. More than half of first nations do not have regular access to high-speed Internet, and roughly 15% have none at all.

We need to be honest with ourselves. This is keeping indigenous communities poor, and it is a choice by the federal government. Every time the government looks the other way on a tax loophole, every time we buy fridges for Galen Weston or give billions of dollars to big oil, that is money we are not spending on the people and communities most in need. The sad reality is that the government only steps up when it is court-ordered to do so. In fact, budget 2024 outlined \$57 billion in settlement money, as if it were a huge success by the government and not a situation where it fought first nations, Inuit and Métis people every step of the way to deny them justice.

To be honest, it is clear that the government is laying the groundwork for future class-action lawsuits against it. One can only imagine what is coming on the housing front. The Auditor General recently released a report on the housing crisis on reserve, and it came out that Indigenous Services has been using the wrong census data, data from 2001. This has effectively robbed first nations, particularly in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, of the housing dollars they deserve, for up to a quarter of a billion dollars.

Did the Minister of Indigenous Services or the Prime Minister rush to right that wrong, to get that money into the hands of communities that had a right to it? No, when he was asked about it, the Prime Minister instead refused to even entertain the idea that they ever would. That is another example of the government fundamentally failing first nations and one that will likely end in a class-action lawsuit, something it deeply deserves.

In contrast, we have a Conservative Party that never saw a tax break for billionaires it did not love. The last time the leader of the official opposition was in government, the Conservatives gave away \$60 billion in corporate tax cuts.

● (1235)

On the day the previous prime minister delivered a public apology to survivors of residential schools, years ago, the current Conservative leader, the leader of the official opposition, said that he was not sure Canada was “getting value for all of this money”. It was money being spent to compensate survivors, and his view was that “we need to engender the values of hard work and independence and self-reliance. That’s the solution in the long run—more money will not solve it.”

I challenge the leader of the official opposition to come to first nations like the ones I represent, where kids were abused, where kids died and where families are still dealing with the poisonous and destructive legacy of the residential school system. I challenge the leader of the official opposition to look people in the face and to say that Canada is the victim here and that Canada is the one that did not get its value. Shame on him.

However, it is not just him who does not understand the harmful legacy of residential schools. The reality is that we are now approaching three years since Canadians learned what first nations across the country already knew: the existence of mass grave sites near residential schools. However, the government is still not supporting communities with the resources they need to bring their children home.

Communities like Cross Lake and others wanted to work with the International Commission on Missing Persons. The work has already begun. However, before it could move forward, the government ended the contract, and now Cross Lake and other communities are forced to start over; it is justice delayed.

Despite his claims that he wants to support communities, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations has done virtually nothing to assist first nations that want to work with the ICMP, a global leader when it comes to uncovering mass graves. He has done virtually nothing to assist first nations that desperately want to work to uncover the truth and to bring their children home.

Government Orders

In Sagkeeng First Nation, an employee recently found bones while digging a trench for a water pipe to a church addition. The area was not part of any known cemetery. The community wants to work with the International Commission on Missing Persons. They have asked CIRNAC for support but have not received any.

People across our north see through the government's empty use of the word “reconciliation”. People across our north want to see action. The NDP will continue to call out the government when it fails indigenous peoples and when it talks a good talk, especially on reconciliation, while refusing to follow through in terms of action. We are proud to support this bill, Bill C-29, but recognize that the monitoring process, or lack thereof, will not create the change indigenous peoples need to see.

Here, in our part of the country, people are clear. Indigenous leaders, elders, youth and advocates are clear that what they need to see is action: an end to third-world living conditions, true change in the face of the climate emergency, and real investment to make life better. They deserve action. They deserve justice, and we should recognize and act on nothing less.

● (1240)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suspect the member will actually be voting in favour of Bill C-29. I believe it is a commitment that is being fulfilled as one of the 94 calls for action. I have found it quite pleasing to know, as a government, that the member cannot cite any other leader of a political party who has done more to move in a substantive way than the Prime Minister of Canada has over the last nine years.

I know the moment I sit down, she is going to continue to be critical of the government, and that is what she is allowed to do. The reality is that, on the calls for action, we see 80% of them being acted on and many of them have been completed, and this is a government that, from day one, has made a commitment, with first nations, to ensure that we move forward on the calls for action.

Will she confirm she is supporting the bill?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, in response to the question, I made clear in my speech that we are supporting the bill, but I am not sure about the member's statements with respect to the historic nature of the Prime Minister's action vis-à-vis indigenous peoples. We can look no further than the fact that the Minister of Finance did not even say the word “indigenous” once, or the word “reconciliation”, in this week's budget. As well, there is the fact that less than 1% of what is needed was invested in first nations housing and infrastructure, given that the recently uncovered \$350-billion gap is nothing to write home about.

Government Orders

I know this member is from Manitoba, and he knows well the infrastructure gap first nations face. Clearly, his government's budget and its ongoing approach are nowhere near what we need to see when it comes to closing the infrastructure gap for Manitobans, especially indigenous peoples.

● (1245)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if my hon. colleague was as shocked as I was by the comments of praise given to his own government by the member for Winnipeg North.

I want to build on what the member was saying about how the word indigenous was not even mentioned once by the finance minister. The fact that the government gave more money to deal with auto theft in this budget than it did to finding murdered and missing indigenous women and girls is sending a very clear message to indigenous people that it values cars more than it values us. That is how crass the government has been.

We know we are billions of dollars short to deal with the housing gap. We know there continues to be boil water advisories. However, I want to speak specifically about the north. We are in the middle of a climate emergency. The government is watching in real time resources not being able to get to communities, and it is becoming a crisis, yet the government has failed to act.

How concerned are communities in the north about the failure of governments to deal with this growing crisis?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her championing of the calls for justice and for action for missing and murdered indigenous women. It is a stark condemnation of a Liberal plan to act on the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women, as well as the fact that there is more money available for stolen cars than there is for action on missing and murdered indigenous women in this budget. It is absolutely shocking.

To the question on the climate emergency, we are on day two of what we refer to as “snowmageddon” here in northern Manitoba. We have had record snowfall, the likes of which we have never seen before at this time of year. The overall message has been that communities do not have the capacity to deal with what climate change is bringing, whether it is historic wildfires, historic flooding and this kind of precipitation.

First nations are clear on the kinds of infrastructure investments they need to prepare in the face of climate change and mitigate the devastating impacts. Frankly, the only party that does not seem to get it is the federal government, which continues to ignore calls to work on the airport in Wasagamack, calls to invest in all-weather road infrastructure and calls to invest in emergency preparedness related to infrastructure. People are bracing themselves for what the summer will bring. The bottom line is that we need the federal government to step up and work with first nations now.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, my colleague's speech was very informative in showing the realities of what indigenous peoples experience in Canada because of the decades of a lack in investments by the Liberal government and past Conservative governments, which has led to the continued marginalization of indigenous peoples.

I wonder if the member could share her thoughts on what will happen because of the budget announcement. Even if this bill were to pass, what would happen with indigenous peoples once we start seeing commitments rather than inaction?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, my thanks to my colleague for the incredible work that she does on behalf of the people from Nunavut and as the indigenous services critic and Crown-indigenous relations critic for the NDP. I am so honoured to work alongside her and our incredible team.

The budget is a huge disappointment for indigenous communities. Indigenous national and regional leaders have been very clear that it misses the mark in so many ways. I will say that I am proud of the work that the NDP did to fight back against a number of the cuts that were proposed, but let us not kid ourselves. The less than 1% funding on housing and infrastructure is a serious failure on the part of the Liberal government. It continues the legacy of Liberal underfunding that we saw under Paul Martin and have seen time and time again from the Liberals and, of course, the Conservatives.

Third world living conditions in indigenous communities did not just happen. They are the result of chronic underfunding and of choices that Liberal and Conservative governments have made to prioritize their rich and powerful friends, rather than investing and working with indigenous communities to make the difference that they deserve and that, I would say, Canada is obligated to make as well.

● (1250)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was a very important speech. I wonder whether the member could share a little bit more about why she feels that the Liberals, despite being in government for seven years, have made repeated promises to indigenous peoples and broken so many of them.

Could the member share why she feels it has taken us so long to get to where we are now, and where the gaps are that she was talking about? Perhaps she could provide us with her thoughts on the implications and impacts on indigenous people across the country.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to work with my colleague. She is a great defender of indigenous communities in her constituency in British Columbia.

What we are seeing from the Liberals is something we have seen from colonial-minded governments of the past, both Liberal and Conservative. Certainly on the Liberal end, government members have talked a good talk about reconciliation and their most important relationship being that with indigenous peoples. However, if we look at the lack of action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the lack of investment in the housing and infrastructure gap, and the sunseting of programs to support residential school survivors, this is the Liberal way, and indigenous peoples deserve far better.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): 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.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, April 29, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent at this time to call it 1:30 p.m. so we can begin private members' hour.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

The House resumed from November 28, 2023, consideration of the motion that Bill C-351, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (maximum security offenders), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and add a few thoughts on Bill C-351.

It is one of the planks the Conservative Party's members talk about. If we remember, there are four things that they talk about, saying these are the things they would do if they were, heaven forbid, to form government. One of them is to abolish crime. I am not

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too sure exactly how they are going to abolish crime. I think they have some sort of wand or, through legislation, they are going to make it illegal to commit a crime and, therefore, if it is illegal to commit a crime, crime will go away. I suspect that is what they are thinking.

I say that somewhat sarcastically, but when I look at this bill, it reinforces the need to maybe chastise the Conservatives and their approach in terms of how they like to say one thing when they are in opposition and do something else when they are in government.

I was surprised when going over the summary. I would ask my friends across the way to follow along. I am sure they would agree with me that there is quite a bit of hypocrisy they might be witnessing first-hand. I will read the summary of the bill. It states that Bill C-351 seeks to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to require that inmates who have been designated as dangerous offenders or convicted of more than one count of first-degree murder be classified as a maximum-security offender and be confined, and this is the really important part, in maximum security by Correctional Service Canada.

There are many thoughts that come to my mind regarding what is being proposed. I could talk about the technicalities of trusting the people in place who are professionally trained individuals and have done a fairly incredible job in our jails, correctional facilities and so forth, and of having more faith in them. I could comment on that, but, rather, I want to point out and expand upon the comments I made about the hypocrisy issue.

Many members will recall the horrific brutality of the killing of Tori Stafford and the abuse and murder that ultimately took place. In fact, it was not that long ago when we heard a regurgitation of it by a number of Conservative members of Parliament, who were raising the issue in fairly graphic detail at times. They were doing that because Terri-Lynne McClintic was transferred to a healing lodge. The Conservative Party was absolutely outraged because that had taken place.

A number of Conservatives took it upon themselves, as I said, to graphically explain what happened to the victim, somewhat referring to the family. Even to this day, I extend my most sincere condolences to them in recognizing the horrific actions that took place. The family and the community are still living with that tragedy.

Having said that, we were soundly criticized. I believe Ralph Goodale was minister of public safety at the time and he was being criticized because of this transfer. I remember it quite well because it was being debated and I commented on the issue. As the debate went on, one of the things we found out was that it was actually Stephen Harper's government that saw Terri-Lynne McClintic transferred out of a high-security prison into a medium-security prison, which enabled her to be transferred to the healing lodge.

Private Members' Business

● (1255)

With a little more research, what can be found is that this is not the first person. When the Conservative Party was in power, we saw a mass murderer actually being transferred out of high-security into medium-security prison. Now we have a private member's bill that is against what Stephen Harper and his government did. They allowed the professionals, the individuals charged with the responsibility for issues such as jail conditions, the type of incarceration and so forth, to make the decisions. Stephen Harper did what was expected of him as prime minister.

Where were the Conservative voices back then? The leader of the Conservative Party was actually in Stephen Harper's cabinet. I am sure members could appreciate why I am a little skeptical of how the Conservatives are now taking the position that they want high security and that it is absolutely mandatory.

At the end of the day, it is all about the votes for the Conservative Party. It is not about the issues, and they have demonstrated that. It is interesting. The Conservatives recently started talking about auto thefts. Now they are being critical of the government, and we have taken tangible actions on that.

I think back to 2007-08, although I might be off by a year or two, when I was in the provincial legislature in Manitoba. The prime minister was Stephen Harper, and today's leader of the Conservative Party was with him. At that time, no province in the country had more auto theft than the province of Manitoba did, and it was by a long shot. This was not even on a per capita basis. On a per capita basis, it would have been an astronomical difference. We had a serious issue.

What got Manitoba back on the right track was when law enforcement, the federal government and the province came together to come up with a solution to deal with auto theft in the province of Manitoba. It was very effective once it really got going.

One should not quote me on the numbers, but we are talking about thousands of vehicles. If we look at Manitoba, with a population base of under 1.2 million back then, and Ontario, with 14 million-plus people, we still had more vehicles being stolen. It took the governments coming together to make a difference. That is what we are seeing with Ontario and Quebec in trying to deal with this very serious issue.

Therein lies the difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals. As a government, we are prepared to work with other jurisdictions in order to have their backs and support Canadians in whatever way we can. We can contrast that with the Conservatives, who are more interested in bumper stickers than they are in resolving problems. That is how I see Bill C-351, which is actually a flip-flop on the position Conservatives held when they were in government and Stephen Harper was the prime minister.

● (1300)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-351, which is sponsored by the Conservative member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup. I followed the saga surrounding the transfer of inmate Paul Bernardo from a maximum-security

penitentiary to the medium-security facility in La Macaza, because the La Macaza institution is located in my riding of Laurentides—Labelle.

On March 27, at the invitation of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, I spent the day inside the institution. What I heard that day had absolutely nothing to do with the inmate in question. We agree that his crimes are revolting, but quite honestly, we are not concerned about his transfer to that facility. What revolts us is what is happening inside the walls of this institution. The correctional officers told me about some things that I want to share.

They told me about the delivery of drugs by drone, faulty and outdated equipment and staff retention issues. They told me about shivs, physical assaults on employees and the list goes on. I spent the day there. Rather than addressing the real problems in federal penitentiaries, since it is not just at the La Macaza facility that we need to take action to ensure the safety of staff who work every day to keep the public safe, the Conservative Party has introduced a populist, sensationalist bill.

That is not taking care of people. When a party aspires to form the government, its absolute priority should be to take care of people. Instead, the Conservatives want to instill fear in everyone by making up problems where there are none. The member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo came to La Macaza in early February for a photo op. Unfortunately for him, some of the facts were wrong.

When I went there, it was not to engage in self-promotion. I was there to get input from the correctional officers and all the employees who work to ensure public safety. I was there to understand their reality, to understand what happens behind the walls, to understand this universe that is completely foreign to me, but is important to grasp in order to avoid coming to hasty conclusions and to have a better sense of this critical problem in our democratic society.

● (1305)

The Bloc Québécois has always stood up for victims. My colleague from Rivière-du-Nord, who has already spoken about this bill, had this to say:

I can assure him that the Bloc Québécois [also sides with the victims]. It always has and always will side with victims. The Bloc also sides with society. We must never lose sight of the fact that our justice system is not just about avenging a victim or punishing a criminal. The purpose of our justice system is to build a safer society...

I can say that I am quite partisan about what comes next. As I often say, in a mature, democratically evolved society where the rule of law is a fundamental value, we cannot accept even the slightest encroachment of politics into the judiciary. To me, that is key.

Private Members' Business

In his work *The Spirit of Law*, Montesquieu outlines his theory of the separation of powers. He states that, in order to avoid despotism, it is absolutely essential to separate the legislative, executive and judicial powers. This bill is nothing less than a proposal to reverse that sacrosanct separation. The Government of Canada, regardless of its colour, whether it is red, blue or potentially orange, may well seize arbitrary powers for itself, but when it comes to judicial powers, politics should not play a part.

The independence of Correctional Service Canada's and the Parole Board of Canada's decisions about incarcerated individuals, including assigning and changing their respective security classification, stems from the quasi-judicial nature that the law confers on them. Even if these two organizations are attached to the government apparatus, they are effectively equipped with an administrative tribunal that must make decisions independently. I like that word.

The Conservatives are proposing to remove that independence from bodies that make decisions based on objective and impartial criteria. The fact is, that worries me. We need to have governments that respect the independence of government agencies. We saw that the Harper government often trampled on that independence. We see that the Conservative Party wants to go down that road again. That does not bode well for the future. On one hand, we have the Liberal Party that interferes in provincial jurisdictions. On the other hand, we have the Conservative Party that wants to interfere in the independence of government organizations. I believe that is going too far, and it does not bode well.

I will wrap up my speech. The bill introduced by the Conservative member from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup is a complete departure from the principle whereby these offenders can be on a path to rehabilitation.

In our society, we do not want penitentiaries to become factories to turn out criminals. Yes, we want them to be places where people are detained, but we also want them to provide an opportunity for rehabilitation. In our society, we want the separation of powers to be respected. We want human rights to be respected. We want those who have demonstrated a willingness to reintegrate into society to have a second chance and to turn their lives around, when possible. We want governments that respect everyone's jurisdictions.

That is the society that we will build when Quebec becomes a country.

• (1310)

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, certainly ending the week by debating the bill before us provides a certain level of weight for anybody who is recounting the atrocities and the sensationalism that has re-entered public discourse. Certainly, as my Bloc colleague has suggested, I think any discussion in the House needs to be victim-centred. It needs to be survivor-centred. When we propose legislation, I think it is important that we have a duty and responsibility to think about all the ways in which our rhetoric and our communications might be received in the general public and might actually cause some harm.

Before I even begin my remarks, I just want to reflect on, given the nature of the particular reactionary piece of legislation before us, the impacts that Bernardo had in my community. As the member for Hamilton Centre, I know that members will recall that two of his victims were in my region. In the early 1990s, as a young adult of 12 or 13 years, I recall, crystal clear, being at a recreation centre at a karate tournament when the news broke of the atrocities that had happened in the community. As I am sure every member of the House does, when I reflect upon the monstrosities that were committed, I go back through them. Of course, we all know that Leslie Erin Mahaffy, Kristen French and Tammy Homolka were the three victims of the two brutal and vicious criminals.

However, sometimes what is lost is that there were also survivors. There are people who are watching this debate right now who would have had a direct connection, a very violent and traumatic connection, to the atrocities committed by Paul Bernardo. I want people who are watching to know that I and the New Democrats, and indeed many folks in here across all party lines, want to reflect on the fact that they are still living through the horrors that have been expressed in the House, and we want to make sure that any approach we have would be victim-centred.

However, I do not believe that the particular piece of legislation before us is necessarily victim-centred. I do not believe that it would offer victims any of the four foundational principles of victim-centred approaches to things like sexual assault, gender-based violence and the idea of safety and respect. I think that one of the most atrocious, evil and despicable things that a human being can do to another person has been sensationalized and generalized, such that all people caught within the frameworks would be comparable to it. I would suggest that is not the case. I want to honour the survivors who might be tuning in, and I want them to know that if there is any good that comes of the current debate, it is that we should be shifting our justice strategies so that they are not just about crime and punishment but also, again, about victim-centred and survivor-centred approaches.

Let us be clear about what the bill would do; it would amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to require that inmates who have been found to be dangerous offenders, or have been convicted of more than one first-degree murder, be assigned to a security classification of maximum and be confined in a maximum-security penitentiary or area in a penitentiary for the duration of their sentence. Indeed, it is a reflection, and I think all social scientists would agree, of a failed tough-on-crime approach. The reason is that, within the due bounds of our law, there are scenarios, setting aside the atrocities of Paul Bernardo, where, based on this, people would eventually end up leaving prison.

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Therefore the question becomes this: What is it that we are unleashing into our community once these people have been incarcerated for decades of their lives? How are we reflecting upon the impacts of any prospect of rehabilitation lost by the failed social approach, the failed Conservative approach, to tough-on-crime? If we put violent people, deeply problematic people and people who were traumatized into settings that continue to dehumanize them, then eventually we will have to work through what will happen when they return to our communities.

• (1315)

It is not like there are no better examples around the world. We only have to look to what some Scandinavian countries have done when it comes to rehabilitation. Norway's rate of recidivism decreased from a high of 70% in 1992 to the lowest in the world, at 20%, after it started community-based correctional facilities and focused on rehabilitation.

When I say these words, it is important for the public and the members in the House to not conflate the evils and the monstrosities of the worst and the most violent among us and to understand that laws ought not to be a knee-jerk response to individual failings or to individual cases, but actually need to be a collective response to our society's social pressures.

In the U.S., with its toughness on crime, which the "Canadian Republican Party" has seemed to have adopted, the rate of return is 76.6%. Even the fiscal Conservatives among them, the ones who are truly fiscal Conservatives, would recognize that the cost of incarceration is enormous. There needs to be discretion. There needs to be the ability for those who are honestly taking steps for rehabilitation to be rehabilitated and to go from the institutionalization of a maximum-security prison to conditions that would better match the realities of the outside world so that when they are released, the likelihood of them reoffending drops.

That is not my opinion; those are the facts, but unfortunately, punishment is the only tool the Conservatives have in their tool box when dealing with these issues. Rehabilitation is not even in their vocabulary. Their position in this regard is one that is sensationalist and does prey upon the most basic and base fears of society and is based on the most evil who walk among us. There are exceptional cases of violence in this country. I am not naive to that. There are people who have done unspeakable things, but our system currently deals with that.

Were there administrative errors? Could there be administrative errors from time to time? Absolutely, that could be the case. However, concerning the transfer of Paul Bernardo, Dr. Ivan Zinger, the Correctional Investigator of Canada, in his written submission to the SECU committee on November 27, wrote, "In this case, it is especially important to make clear that Canada's correctional system is based on the principle that the rule of law follows sentenced persons into prison."

Imprisonment does not mean total deprivation and absolute forfeiture of one's rights. The investigator went on to say, "My Office cannot, and does not, select or decline cases on the basis of one's criminal conduct or notoriety. My Office serves all federally sentenced persons, regardless of their sentence." That is the underlying principle of the rule of law.

I would encourage members of the House, including the so-called "tough on crime" Conservatives, to reflect on ways, perhaps in the remaining months of this session and in the remaining time we are in this legislature and this Parliament, to shift their thinking and to start actually thinking about the victims and the survivors of crime as the primary priority for our legislative responses. I would like them to think about the material conditions for people currently within our federal prison systems. I would like them to think about the investments that could be made to support people in mental health and to support people in social crisis.

With that, I am thankful for this time. I will take my last five seconds to reflect upon not just the victims who were murdered by Paul Bernardo, but also upon all the survivors who may be watching this. They should know that, as New Democrats, our hearts go out to them, to their families and to the communities impacted by this.

• (1320)

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been almost a year since one of the most notorious serial killers in Canada was moved from a maximum-security prison to a medium-security facility under provisions of the NDP-Liberals' so-called justice legislation, Bill C-83.

This serial killer is infamous for his long string of rapes in Scarborough; the rape, torture and murder of his sister-in-law; and the rape, torture and murder of two very young, innocent girls from St. Catharines. We all know his partner in crime, his wife, Karla Homolka, skated with a 10-year sentence, despite actively participating in the crimes as per the videotape the police had in their possession. This rapist, this serial killer, this monster is Paul Bernardo.

Let me acknowledge the pain and suffering, and the repeated victimization, of the families of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French. I cannot imagine the pain that they live with everyday. God bless them.

After Bernardo, that monster, was found guilty of his crimes, the judge correctly sentenced him to life imprisonment as a dangerous offender, meaning he should have stayed locked up in maximum security until he died of old age. However, no, our current government, this woke bunch of MPs who are running our justice system, decided that Paul Bernardo is the real victim, a nice, fine, misunderstood fellow who deserves medium security.

The Liberals passed a law, Bill C-83, which explicitly tells police, judges and Correctional Services Canada to impose the least restrictive measures on a person as possible. In practice, this means that this monster, Paul Bernardo, now lives in a dormitory, has a tennis court and ice rink for recreation, and access to sharp instruments when he gets that urge to murder again. It is not even close to maximum security. That makes no sense.

Private Members' Business

On June 23 last year, I asked the justice minister, in this very House, why Paul Bernardo gets such special treatment. What was his answer? Of course, he did not answer at all. Instead, one of the Prime Minister's attack dogs got up to say that, just because Paul Bernardo is a bad man, it does not mean the Liberals did anything wrong with their legislation.

Yes, everyone heard me right: the Liberals refused to take responsibility for their own actions. However, members need not worry. Since the current NDP-Liberal government refuses to take responsibility for its own actions, it will be the Conservatives who once again step up to the plate to fix the situation.

What would that fix? Bill C-351 is a bill introduced by my great Conservative colleague from Quebec. This legislation would fix the mess created by the Liberals in the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. It would amend section 28 of the act, which currently states, "If a person is or is to be confined in a penitentiary, the Service shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that the penitentiary in which they are confined is one that provides them with the least restrictive environment".

That is what the Liberals have changed it to say. They made it as easy on the convicted criminal as possible. This is why Bernardo is getting all the special treatment.

My colleague's bill proposes to change that section to say, "ensure that the penitentiary in which they are confined is one that provides them with an environment that contains only the necessary restrictions". In other words, make it easier on a convicted criminal only if it is absolutely necessary. This legislation is making a significant fix through changing the words "least restrictive environment" to "environment that contains only the necessary restrictions". While it is a simple language change, it is a massive policy change.

When it comes to crime and what to do with criminals who victimize Canadians, Conservatives, such as myself, my colleague and our leader, have very different approaches than those of the NDP-Liberal government. Conservatives believe that victims of crime, those who are innocent, who have been terrorized in their own homes, who have had their cars stolen, who have been mugged on our streets, who have been raped and who have had family members murdered, should come first.

The NDP-Liberals have a very different approach to crime from that of the Conservatives. I believe in common sense. If a crime was committed, the criminal needs to answer. The woke, NDP-Liberal approach is that the criminal is the single most important person in the justice system. They believe, and they have written into law, that police, prosecutors, judges, jurors, and jailers must take into account diversity, equity, inclusion and critical race theory when dealing with criminals. They have put into place checklists. Does this criminal have any sort of skin colour, racial background, sexual identity or anything in their background that would warrant that criminal to walk away scot-free? If so, let them go. That is the NDP-Liberal approach to criminal justice.

This woke crowd does not care if a criminal has raped a woman, kidnapped a child or murdered an indigenous man, because, in their minds, that so-called underprivileged criminal is more important

than any victim can be. In their topsy-turvy world view, it actually sees those committing the crimes as the people who need to be cared for, while the actual victims continue to suffer over and over again.

Senator Kim Pate, appointed by the current Liberal Prime Minister, summed up the Liberal hug-a-thug position quite nicely last year when she addressed the Fredericton City Council. She said, "Canada's criminal legal system is unjust, discriminatory and biased against indigenous people and people of colour."

● (1325)

I agree that it has been unjust against indigenous victims of crime like those on the James Smith Cree Nation. The coroner's inquest, which was held in my home riding of Saskatoon West, by the way, was clear on the point. The man who murdered all those indigenous people on the reserve should never have been released in the first place. However, folks like Senator Pate do not particularly care about those victims, do they? Instead, they are making excuses for the inexcusable. Senator Pate is one of the many examples of what is absolutely wrong with NDP-Liberal justice.

Once a crime is committed, the criminal must be punished, period. That is why a common-sense Conservative government will bring in tough-on-crime legislation. We will lock up the criminals. We will stop the crime. "Diversity, equity, inclusion" and critical race theory approaches that lead to "hug a thug" and to repeat offenders will be swept away. Common-sense Conservatives will bring back mandatory minimums. We will crack down on the people who sexually exploit our children and on the people who peddle sexually explicit images of children on the Internet. Indeed, my Conservative colleague for North Okanagan—Shuswap brought in his private member's bill, Bill C-291, to do this very thing.

We will take the issue of women being trafficked into sexual slavery seriously and not laugh it off as sex workers and body positivity, as men pay their pimps in order to abuse and demean women. My colleague, the Conservative MP for Peace River—Westlock has introduced legislation in the House to accomplish this through Bill C-308, an act respecting the national strategy to combat human trafficking.

We will ensure that men who commit violence against pregnant women face stiffer sentences. The NDP and the Liberals voted to kill the legislation, based on the justification that beating a pregnant woman senseless is just another form of abortion, almost as if that were a good thing. I would argue that the last thing a civilized country like Canada should do is beat pregnant women and not punish criminals properly for it. I proudly supported the legislation brought forward by my Conservative colleague, the member for Yorkton—Melville, that would have allowed the judge to consider pregnancy as an aggravating factor when sentencing someone who has beaten a pregnant woman.

Private Members' Business

Shall I give another example? Why not? Let us contrast, juxtapose and expose the soft-on-crime approach of the NDP-Liberals. My Conservative colleague, the MP for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, has introduced Bill C-296, the respecting families of murdered and brutalized persons act, which would make life imprisonment actually life imprisonment. That means that if someone commits—

• (1330)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. We have just been raising the issue of false titles, but the member just used one again. “NDP-Liberal” and “Bloc-Liberal” government are false titles. They are falsehoods and should not be used in the House of Commons.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): These are points of order that were raised earlier. As the hon. member knows, the Speaker is reviewing the issues, and we will be back to the House in the next few weeks with some recommendations on how to move forward with some of what is being said.

At this point I am going to allow the hon. member for Saskatoon West to resume his speech.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, I know it really annoys the NDP when we talk about this. Its members need to stop supporting the Liberals if that is what they want.

Life imprisonment would mean that if someone commits murder and gets a life sentence, they would serve a minimum of 25 to 40 years before parole eligibility. Let us face it: Right now the sentences under the current woke system of putting criminals first mean letting murderers walk away after very little time served.

I will give colleagues some examples. Many may recall that a few years back, the NDP-Liberals made changes to ease up on the sentencing rules. Around that time, Christopher Garnier drugged, raped and murdered off-duty Halifax police officer Catherine Campbell. He did horrible things to her, spread her body parts around Halifax and treated her remains like human garbage, according to the judge. As outraged as the judge was, the best he could do was to sentence the serial rapist and now murderer to 13 and a half years, reduced to only 11 years with time served. Imagine that, 11 years for drugging, raping, murdering and desecrating the body of a police officer. By the way, the coroner testified that it took Catherine Campbell six minutes to die by strangulation after her rape; that is just two years of prison time for every minute he took to kill her. This could happen only in Canada and only in the NDP-Liberals' woke version of Canada.

Let us talk about Rylen Heavenfire in Calgary; this man got only four years for shooting and killing his brother with a gun. The facts are undisputed: “Heavenfire pointed the shotgun he was carrying at his brother and shot him in the face”, yet the judge said the man could be rehabilitated. What about punishing Heavenfire for taking the life of his brother? Does his brother's life not count even a little bit, or is the victim in this story just another piece of human garbage?

The scales of justice are represented by an icon of a lady wearing a blindfold. She does not see race, skin colour or whom one prays to. All she cares about is balancing the scales. What is fair to the

victims is justice. Is four years for raising a shotgun, pulling the trigger and murdering one's brother really justice? Conservatives believe that if someone murders someone, then they should be punished for their crime. For those of us with actual common sense, it is not the victims who should be treated like human garbage.

Let me wrap up by saying that I and my colleagues in the Conservative Party fully support the legislation in front of us today. We believe in common-sense justice. We believe criminals like Paul Bernardo who were sentenced to maximum security should not be getting special treatment. They should be in maximum security. We believe in justice for repeat victims, not coddling repeat criminals. Conservatives believe in protecting families in their homes, not allowing rapists and murderers to roam our streets unpunished. It is time to stop the crime. It is time to bring it home.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup has five minutes for his right of reply.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to deliver a final reply in the debate on my private member's bill, Bill C-351, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act regarding maximum security offenders.

I will not go into the details of the context surrounding the introduction of such a bill. I will simply point out that what prompted it was the news last June that serial killer Paul Bernardo had been transferred from a maximum-security prison to a medium-security one. It was news that shocked the public and forced the families and victims to relive their trauma. This bill seeks to ensure that maximum-security offenders remain in a maximum-security facility, where they deserve to be.

I would once again like to thank my colleague from Niagara Falls, who introduced a similar bill, as well as a motion calling for the immediate cancellation of Bernardo's transfer. Unfortunately, his motion was defeated.

I listened carefully to my colleagues' speeches, in the first hour of reading and today, and I have a few comments to make.

My Liberal colleagues mentioned that we do not care about women. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our Conservative Party has always stood with victims. Unfortunately, when it comes to dangerous offenders, the vast majority of victims are women. I also heard the Liberals say that we are using this bill to fearmonger. They falsely claim that we want to make people believe that offenders like Bernardo could end up being released. That is not the purpose of this bill at all.

The probability that such a dangerous criminal would be out on release is extremely low. However, the fact that he was transferred from a maximum- to a medium-security prison is something we want to prevent. I repeat, the very simple goal of this bill is to ensure that such criminals, given their horrific actions, are kept in maximum-security prisons, not in institutions where they would receive much more generous privileges. Most importantly, we want to prevent the families of victims from having to relive a trauma that no one would want to experience.

Other colleagues have also talked about rehabilitation. I heard someone say earlier that we do not believe in it. That is absolutely not the case. Our party does believe in rehabilitation, especially for young offenders. For some offences, a second chance is the way forward, but in the Bernardo case, for example, I am sure members will agree that rehabilitation is impossible. A second chance for such a monster is out of the question. We are talking about at least 1,000 inmates in Canada who are considered dangerous offenders.

As evidence of the current government's soft-on-crime attitude, the response to an Order Paper question submitted by my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo revealed that most of these offenders are serving their sentences in medium- or even minimum-security prisons. There are dangerous offenders in minimum-security institutions. That is what happens when a government does not have its priorities straight, when a government believes that the

right thing to do is to offer dangerous criminals the least restrictive environment. That is what happened in 2019 with the passage of Bill C-83, which puts the comfort of criminals ahead of concern for victims' families. That is pure liberalism. That is the legacy of the Liberal government after nine years in power.

On this side of the House, we stand by the victims and not the criminals. That is why I introduced this bill and I am proud of it. Where the Liberals have failed, we will succeed. We will restore common sense in our justice and correctional system.

• (1335)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 1, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

It being 1:39 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, April 29, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:39 p.m.)

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