



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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# House of Commons Debates

Official Report  
(Hansard)

**Volume 151 No. 085**  
Thursday, June 9, 2022

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 9, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

### HOUSE OF COMMONS CALENDAR

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 28(2)(b), it is my duty to lay upon the table the House of Commons calendar for the year 2023.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to paragraph 90(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to lay upon the table the annual report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner in relation to the Conflict of Interest Act for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

[*English*]

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

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### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to two petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

\* \* \*

### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** While I am on my feet, I move:

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

**The Speaker:** The question is on the motion.

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

The hon. opposition House leader.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded division.

**The Speaker:** Call in the members.

• (1045)

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

(*Division No. 141*)

### YEAS

#### Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney
Blois	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer

*Routine Proceedings*

Garneau	Garrison	d'Entremont	Desilets
Gazan	Gerretsen	Doherty	Dreeshen
Gould	Green	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Hajdu	Hanley	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Hardie	Hepfner	Ferreri	Findlay
Holland	Housefather	Fortin	Gallant
Hussen	Hutchings	Garon	Gaudreau
Iacono	Idlout	Généreux	Genuis
Ien	Jaczek	Gladu	Godin
Johns	Jones	Goodridge	Gourde
Jowhari	Julian	Gray	Hallan
Kayabaga	Kelloway	Kelly	Kitchen
Khalid	Khera	Kmiec	Kram
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kwan	Lalonde	Kusie	Lake
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux	Lantsman	Larouche
Lapointe	Lattanzio	Lawrence	Lehoux
Lauzon	Lebouthillier	Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Lightbound	Long	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Lloyd	Lobb
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacKenzie	Maguire
MacGregor	Maloney	Martel	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	McLean	Melillo
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty	Michaud	Moore
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Morantz	Motz
McLeod	McPherson	Muys	Nater
Mendès	Medicino	Normandin	Paul-Hus
Miao	Miller	Pauzé	Perkins
Morrice	Morrissey	Perron	Plamondon
Murray	Naqvi	Poilievre	Rayes
Noormohamed	O'Connell	Redekopp	Reid
Oliphant	Petitpas Taylor	Rempel Garner	Richards
Powlowski	Qualtrough	Roberts	Rood
Robillard	Rodriguez	Ruff	Savard-Tremblay
Romanado	Sahota	Schmale	Seeback
Sajjan	Saks	Shields	Shiple
Samson	Sarai	Simard	Small
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke	Soroka	Steinley
Sgro	Shanahan	Ste-Marie	Stewart
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Strahl	Thériault
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh	Therrien	Thomas
Sorbara	St-Onge	Tochor	Tolmie
Sudds	Tassi	Trudel	Uppal
Taylor Roy	Thompson	Van Popta	Vecchio
Turnbull	Valdez	Vidal	Vignola
Van Bynen	van Koeverden	Villemure	Vis
Vandal	Vandenbeld	Vuong	Wagantall
Virani	Weiler	Warkentin	Webber
Wilkinson	Yip	Williams	Williamson
Zahid	Zarrillo	Zimmer— 135	
Zuberi— 167			

**NAYS**

## Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benzen	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell

**PAIRED**

## Members

Anand	Boissonnault
Dowdall	Fast
Guilbeault	Hoback
Jeneroux	Joly
Ng	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzer— 12

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I declare the motion carried.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### CRIMINAL CODE

BILL C-5—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.)** moved:

That in relation to Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the consideration of the report stage and not more than one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the third reading stage of the said bill; and

That, at the expiry of the five hours provided for the consideration at report stage and fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at the third reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle on a point of order.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for me to present the petition that I planned to table today.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table her petition?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

### PETITIONS

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am at a loss for words with regard to this petition signed by good people from the municipality of Notre-Dame-du-Laus, which reads, and I quote:

Whereas:

We live in the 21st century;

Our astronauts travel to the moon;

We are controlling Perseverance on Mars;

The next generation is leaving the crib with a cellphone in hand;

Cellular phone service must be considered an essential service, just like high-speed Internet;

We reject Bell Canada's approach to wait until 2024–2025 to invest in a cellular network in our village because, in 2021, being able to use a cellphone is no longer a luxury but essential for safety;

We are a tourist village in a beautiful part of the country that would like to attract young families and entrepreneurs, and we should be able to ensure the safety of the tourists on our roads and of all our residents.

I want to commend the 2,067 people who signed this petition.

## Government Orders

• (1050)

[English]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has a point of order.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Madam Speaker, inspired by our hon. colleague from Laurentides—Labelle, I am wondering if there might be unanimous consent for me to present the petition I had hoped to present this morning.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to table her petition?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I am sorry, but there is not unanimous consent.

I would ask members that if they are looking for unanimous consent on their motions, they should consult all parties of the House. It would make things a lot easier. I know this is something we have talked about on a number of occasions regarding other members as well.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Madam Speaker, I think our rules on unanimous consent are for long preambular policy statements. In this instance, where it was unanticipated that we would move to orders of the day, I did not have any opportunity to consult anyone, as I think was the case for the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle. I understand your ruling, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to clarify that I would never try to claim unanimous consent without having canvassed all other members of this place.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I appreciate the hon. member's additional information, and I do want to advise her that the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle did get unanimous consent from all parties prior to presenting it.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

### CRIMINAL CODE

BILL C-5—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places or use the “raise hand” function so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

I see that many people want to participate, so I will have to put fairly strict time limits on questions and comments.

The member for Barrie—Innisfil.

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, once again we are privy to a front-row seat to the decline in democracy. Bill C-5, the soft-on-crime bill, has gone through committee, and there have been thousands and millions of dissenting voices on this bill. There have been advocates and stakeholders, and there have been police chiefs and police forces across Canada that have spoken against this bill, because it does diminish mandatory minimum sentences.

Just to give an example, Bill C-5 would eliminate a number of mandatory minimum sentences related to gun crimes, including robbery with a firearm, extortion with a firearm, and weapons trafficking excluding firearms and ammunition. This would only embolden criminals, make them more brazen, in our communities in Canada.

The Liberals have been aided and abetted in this time allocation, this motion of closure, by their puppy-dog partners in the NDP. They have pulled the choke collar on the New Democrats to get them to conform and sit and be good partners in this. This decline in democracy, this assault, will not make our communities safer and will threaten the lives of Canadians across the country.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

• (1055)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I hear other voices that I have not recognized, and I would ask those individuals to please hold on to their thoughts quietly until they are recognized to speak.

The hon. government House leader.

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would say that we diminish democracy when we talk to fellow colleagues in the way the member opposite just did. To talk about working collaboratively as parliamentarians and to categorize it in the way the member did is disrespectful to this place.

We had a minority government that was elected in the last election, and there was an expectation that Canadians had of us that we would come together, work collaboratively, reach across the aisle and try to find common cause and common purpose, and that, even as we criticize each other and even as we are in different parties and often have different views, we would respectfully try to find middle ground.

I would suggest that out of the gates the Conservatives were doing that on Bill C-3 and on Bill C-4, but somewhere along the line that disappeared. Suddenly, collaboration of any kind, working together in any way, is seen as undemocratic. That is preposterous. Having votes in the House of Commons is not undemocratic. Moving legislation through the House of Commons is not undemocratic. It debases this institution to say that it is, and it particularly debases this institution when the Conservatives themselves use time allocation more than anybody else in any government that has ever been, so it is dishonest—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I have to allow for other questions.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I could talk about Bill C-5 and provide a detailed explanation as to why we should spend more time discussing it, but that is not even the issue anymore. It is as though we were starring in *Groundhog Day*, revisiting the same scenario over and over again. The government is bombarding us with gag orders day after day and limiting time for debate.

Members of Parliament are supposed to fine-tune the bills tabled by the government. On top of that, this is a minority government. It needs to be said: Quebeckers and Canadians gave this government a minority mandate so that members of Parliament can do their work properly, rein in the government when necessary, work together, and make the government understand that any bill can always be improved. However, that is not what we are seeing here today, and the Bloc Québécois can only deplore it.

I have a simple question. When will this never-ending string of gag orders stop?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, there is no doubt we have had plenty of time for debate. We debated at second reading for several days, and the bill was in committee for nine days. Now we are here debating it at third reading and then the Senate will have time to debate it, so there has been a lot of time to debate and propose amendments. There comes a point when we have to vote and move into the action phase.

We see reducing the number of vulnerable people who come into the system having committed no serious crime as absolutely essential, along with reducing the number of indigenous and Black people in the system in general. That is our goal. We have spent a long time debating; now it is time to act.

[English]

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):** Madam Speaker, there are very important things in Bill C-5 in the reduction of mandatory minimum sentences, which have terrible impacts on indigenous and racialized Canadians. However, I have to correct the record for the Conservatives and the Bloc members, who seem not to have paid attention to what happened in committee.

We did work collaboratively in committee, and government members accepted two amendments from the NDP, which have strengthened the bill. One of those amendments would get rid of criminal records for personal possession of drugs within two years, and the other strengthens the accountability mechanisms through record-keeping when police use their discretion to avoid charging people. Those are two important improvements in the bill.

*Government Orders*

When they talk about how Parliament is supposed to work, that is exactly how it worked in committee. We got a better bill, a stronger bill, and today I am going to support this motion for time allocation, because we have to get this done on behalf of those Canadians who suffer from the mandatory minimums that were introduced at one time by the Liberals but also, primarily, by the Conservatives.

• (1100)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite, and I completely agree with him that there were a number of amendments moved at committee that improved this bill. A number were moved by the NDP, which I think were very important, and there was one moved by the Conservatives, which was adopted. That is what Canadians expect: that, despite the fact that we have our differences and we come to this place with different ideas of how we can improve the country, improve the safety of the country and improve the condition of Canadians generally, we find ways to work together. That is exactly what happened with this bill.

Addressing the absolutely terrible overrepresentation of indigenous people and Black individuals is something that is at the core of this bill, but really it is taking a lesson from what has not worked elsewhere: longer sentences, removing judicial discretion, and removing the opportunity to look at the individual circumstances of a case when we are dealing with somebody who does not represent a threat to community safety. When we are looking at first-time offenders when they are having that first intersection with their life turning down a dark path, we should make sure that we inject ourselves at that point, look at their circumstances and find a more positive way to redirect them. That is the right way to go. We have seen that in jurisdiction after jurisdiction that has tried the approach the Conservatives are pushing, it has failed. It has failed to increase public safety, and it actually makes things a lot worse.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I very much support Bill C-5. I agree with everything the hon. government House leader has just said about the importance of criminal justice actually being effective in deterring crime and not resulting in the disproportionate convictions of people of colour and indigenous people in this country, which is clear on the record.

My concern is about using time allocation. It is true that it was started under the previous Conservative government, but I have to say that it has been pursued with a vengeance by the current Liberal government. I do not see any difference in how frequently time allocation is being used. My concern is, as it is with everything in this place, that those things that start as bad habits quickly become rules. We are essentially saying time after time that parliamentary debate and our Standing Orders for how legislation proceeds through this place are just inconvenient and slow things down.

I am not without sympathy for the government's point of view, because of the obstruction from other parties, but I will say this. I do not think we have an election looming. The Liberal-NDP confidence and supply agreement does not suggest that if we do not get this bill through before the end of June we will have a terrible calamity in getting the bill to the Senate.

I would ask the hon. House leader to reconsider the routine use of shutting down debate in this place.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, to my hon. colleague, I will say that it is certainly not my preference. When we started, we actually had a really good beginning, I think, working with the Conservative opposition on Bill C-3 and on Bill C-4, where ideas came forward. We were able to work together and we were able to find middle ground. Then there was a change. All of a sudden, with Bill C-8 as an example, it took over four months. Consistently, we were told “just a couple more speakers, just a bit more time”. Four months disappeared, and an enormous amount of House time was used.

At a certain point in time, I had to come to the realization that there was no earnest effort to move things through the House, that the interest was in obstruction. We saw that in Bill C-14. Bill C-14 is a bill that the Conservatives support. Even though they support it, they were moving amendments to hear their own members, shutting down the House, moving concurrence motions and using them to obstruct. I am left with one of two choices: get nothing passed or use time allocation. As they obstruct, on the one hand they block any legislation from moving forward and not even allow that as an option; on the other hand, they criticize the only tool we have to actually get legislation done, a tool they used with great frequency.

• (1105)

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, to the government House leader, conditional sentence orders are a very important tool to ensure that those who pose no risk to society are able to have alternatives to spending time in jail.

I wonder if my colleague can outline how that is going to impact incarceration, particularly of indigenous and Black Canadians. I would note that prior to the many of the mandatory minimum penalties that came in, there were about 11,000 conditional sentence orders that were imposed. Right now, we are hovering around the 6,000 mark, so almost 5,000 Canadians a year spend time unnecessarily in detention and, as a result, face an increased risk of reoffending because of the system they are in.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, it was Newt Gingrich in the United States who started the movement on increasing the amount of time in incarceration. He called it the greatest mistake of his career. After reflection and seeing how disastrous it was in the United States, he said that policy was the biggest mistake of his political life. When we take a look at the United States, the United Kingdom or Australia, we see that in every instance where a policy has been pursued to increase incarceration, it has not led to lower crime rates. It has led to higher rates of recidivism, more problems and more crime.

*Government Orders*

We need to move outside of the talking points and actually think about what is happening. As the question posed by my hon. colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, has indicated, when we have first-time offenders, low-risk offenders, rather than have them in prison, where they learn to be professional criminals and where they are in an environment that is not conducive to their rehabilitation, if we can divert them and redirect them to a different path, that is what augments and improves community safety.

**Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member keeps perpetuating the same myth. He mentioned Newt Gingrich and former prime minister Stephen Harper. The mandatory minimums that would be eliminated in Bill C-5, and it is important for Canadians to know this, are not from a Conservative government. They are from a Liberal government. I do not know why Liberals cannot accept that part of their past.

The mandatory minimums for extortion with a firearm, discharging a firearm with intent, and robbery with a firearm were introduced by Liberal governments. I know the hon. member served with former Liberal MP and parliamentary secretary for justice Marlene Jennings. He knows her. She said, "It was a Liberal government that brought in mandatory minimum sentencing for gun-related crimes. This is a whole category of them, where currently it is a minimum of one year. There is a second category of designated offences where it currently is four years. Liberals sought to increase the one year to two years and the four years to five years at committee."

Is the hon. member suggesting that Marlene Jennings does not know what she is talking about?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, what I am suggesting is that science and evidence have borne out that giving judicial discretion improves community safety. What does that mean? It means that a judge can look at an individual situation and consider—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I am going to interrupt the member. I did not hear any blowback when the hon. member from the official opposition was asking a question. I would ask for the same respect when the government is answering a question. If individuals have other thoughts or views, then they should wait until they are recognized during questions and comments.

The hon. government House leader.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, I did listen very respectfully to my hon. colleague's comment and the discussion. I believe that he and I want to make sure that community safety is improved in this country, that our neighbours are living in communities that are as safe as they can possibly be, and that we adopt policies for that. If we both agree that is our premise, then obviously what we need to do is look at the evidence. The evidence says that judges are allowed to look at an individual situation, which, by the way, means that they can actually give a sentence that is greater than the mandatory minimum, but it means they might give one less than that if they determine it is not in the best interests of public safety and rehabilitation to have that higher sentence.

What we have seen, particularly for vulnerable people, is that if they are incarcerated for a long period of time, the likelihood of them reoffending is much higher.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, Bill C-5, in and of itself, is an interesting bill, but we get the feeling that it comes with a poison pill, which bothers me. Two bills that do not necessarily have anything to do with one another are being lumped together to get the less popular one passed.

As the government House leader, the member is responsible for the government's strategy.

Why is the government trying to hand us poison pills yet again? Why can we not have transparent debates in the best interests of Canadians on issues that affect them?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, it is clear to me that this bill is extremely important to national security and public safety, in general, and I do not think it contains anything that is inappropriate. One of its objectives is to reduce the incarceration rates of indigenous people and vulnerable people. I think this bill has clear objectives and will work well for the country.

[*English*]

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to echo the calls from the Black Legal Action Centre, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies and the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund.

We know that there have been some incremental steps that are, by and large, due to some of the good amendments that we were able to put forward as New Democrats. In the Liberals' submission to the committee, they called for the removal of mandatory minimums that were deemed to be unconstitutional, the removal of the band of conditional sentencing for offences that had mandatory minimum penalties, and the fulfillment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 32 to allow a trial judge, upon giving reasons, to depart from the mandatory minimum sentence.

Finally, there are lots of conversations about these disproportional impacts on Canadians of African descent, yet the government still has not addressed an amendment to subsection 718.2(e) of the Criminal Code so that sentencing judges can have the information required to pass appropriate sentences on Black defendants.

When will the government finally get around to listening to communities and taking substantive steps, rather than incremental steps, toward justice within this country?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, it certainly is an incredibly important matter. The Black Canadian justice strategy is being developed right now, and this is something that is being looked at. I encourage the member to continue to participate in that process as we take action to make sure that what we do in our criminal justice system actually achieves the objective of improving community safety and making sure we do not disproportionately affect vulnerable people.

One thing is really unfortunate. We all hate crime, obviously. We all abhor it. We see violence and we want it to be over and to end it. When we play games with that and when we give overly simplistic solutions, it does an incredible injustice to what has to be done. What has to be done is to make sure that in each and every situation we look at what is in the best interests of rehabilitation, reducing recidivism and making our communities safe.

That is what this bill does. It would allow judges to have discretion in those cases where community safety is not threatened. Where there are low-risk offenders or first-time offenders, there is the opportunity to have the discretion to make sure their lives get turned on to a positive path and that we do not overincarcerate, thereby having our prisons overrepresented by certain populations.

**Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is time to dispel a myth that has been percolating in the House for some time now, particularly from the Liberal government and supported by the NDP. It is this notion that conditional sentences are going to substantially decrease the overincarceration of marginalized offenders, particularly Black Canadians and indigenous offenders.

We heard at committee from two police chiefs. One was Chief Robert Davis, who is an indigenous police chief and the only indigenous police chief of a municipal police service. The other was Chief Darren Montour, who is an indigenous police chief on the Six Nations of the Grand River, which is the largest reservation in Canada. Both individuals, who have significant decades of policing, confirmed that conditional sentences do not work. They do not have the resources to monitor compliance. Working in the trenches, they are seeing prosecution after prosecution of offenders who continually repeat breaches of their conditional sentence orders.

How can the government indicate now that this is somehow going to decrease the overincarceration rate? We have empirical evidence, particularly in my riding but as well as from across the country, that it does not work.

• (1115)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, actually, the evidence goes in the opposite direction. We are talking in this instance about people who are going to be incarcerated for less than two years. We are talking about individuals who are a low risk to the community. Most often, they are dealing with addiction issues, which are in fact mental health issues. We know that when dealing with mental health issues, keeping families together and having access to community services is the best chance at rehabilitation and getting people on a positive path.

It is not just that we do not want them to reoffend, because the objective in every instance in which there is intersectionality with our criminal justice system is rehabilitation. It is also fundamentally

### *Government Orders*

an issue of cost, if we want to look at it that way. Not only is it going to reduce crime, but conditional sentencing costs the system much less, which means we can put more dollars into preventing crimes from happening in the first place. Focusing on extending sentences, what it did in places like California and the U.K.—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I am sorry to interrupt, but there are other questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of International Development.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague about David Daubney, who was a predecessor of mine in my riding. He was a Conservative MP in the Mulroney years. He was actually chair of the justice committee during that time. He said that during the Harper years, the “departmental distaste for research and recommendations is the opposite of the situation under administrations such as those of Conservative justice minister Kim Campbell.” He also said that “mandatory minimum sentences have been widely condemned in corrections circles” and added that the previous Harper government “misrepresented conditional sentences as permissive even though lawyers, judges and the public know they can be made suitably restrictive.”

What does my colleague think about my Conservative predecessor in my riding of Ottawa West—Nepean?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, I would say that is a reasonable position, and one that is rooted in science and evidence. One of the reasons why I reference other jurisdictions is because there was a movement, many decades ago, toward mandatory minimums and higher rates of incarceration. That resulted not only in much greater costs, much larger numbers of people in prison and much larger numbers of vulnerable people in prison, particularly from the mentally ill and vulnerable populations, but it resulted in higher crime.

When one thinks about it, it is actually logical. When one expands a population and somebody has a first intersection with the law, and they made a mistake and have begun to head down a dark path, and one puts them into prison and keeps them there for a long period of time, instead of being rehabilitated, they are in a hardened environment where things get worse and they come out not as healthy. They are more likely to reoffend. That is why, and I will come to it in my next question, I think the example of California is very prescient.

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):** Madam Speaker, there has been some discussion about why it is urgent to pass this bill and there is the idea that we can somehow just let this drift on. If we do not pass this bill soon, it means that additional people will be sent to detention or prison under the mandatory minimums.

*Government Orders*

Those people, through no fault of their own, will end up losing their housing, losing their jobs and having their kids apprehended. There is an urgency here that we correct this mistake. It does not matter to me who made it in the past. It is urgent to eliminate these 20 mandatory minimums so that people can get sentences that are appropriate to their crimes and get things that will help reintegrate them back into the community instead of forcing them into worse situations.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, I think that this is precisely right. The reality is that not only is this bill exceptionally important for what it is going to do in the circumstances that the member has just referenced, but we have a lot of other important legislation that we have to get done in the next 10 days. Therefore, it is important that we move forward.

On the point that the member raised specifically, it is important to note that judicial discretion means that one can look at a case and if it is in fact very serious, one can go much higher than the mandatory minimum. If it is a circumstance where there were mitigating circumstances, community safety was not at risk, or an individual had an underlying mental health or other issue, there could be other means and other options available to make sure that this person was rehabilitated, healthy and back in the community. That means that this individual is less likely to reoffend and less likely to have violence in the community. It means that the costs are radically lower. It is proved in evidence. It is all there.

• (1120)

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I find it fascinating that the member opposite talks about being in prison as a dark place for people's entire lives: the rest of their lives. We are talking about how hidden in this bill is human trafficking with material benefit. What does that mean? In the words of two women who live in my riding, Linda MacDonald and Jeanne Sarson, who wrote a book called *Women Unsilenced*, they talk about torture. They talk about the sale of women and girls.

If that is not something that we need more time to talk about and make the House aware of, so that we can protect those who are vulnerable in our society, I do not know what is. For the government to talk about time allocation for such an important topic is absolutely untenable. It is unfathomable. It is absolutely ridiculous and, quite honestly, this is virtue signalling at its worst.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that when a judge hears the matter of a serious crime of the nature the member is talking about, there will be serious sentences. In fact, they can go far beyond the mandatory minimums. That is not what we are talking about here.

I will go quickly to the example in California. In California, people, for political reasons, decided that it was really worthwhile to play up the worst offences—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** There is no debate going back and forth. Again, I want to remind the hon. members from the official opposition that if they have further questions and comments, they should wait until the appropriate time to be able to do that. I am sure that they would want to listen to what the government House leader has to say, so that they can really un-

derstand what he is saying and be able to respond accordingly in future questions.

The hon. government House leader.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, the reason we care about what happens in other jurisdictions is because when they try something and make a mistake, we avoid doing the same thing. It is the same reason why we look at what happened in California: It went to the approach that the Conservatives are talking about, and it led to an overburdened criminal justice system and a recidivism rate that was over 25% for violent recidivism. Ours is below 1%. The Conservatives' example cost more money, led to more crime and was a complete, abject failure, and that is the policy they are suggesting we pursue.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the Liberals had an opportunity, with this bill, to provide full decriminalization for simple drug possession. In fact, this hon. member voted against the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni's private member's bill, Bill C-216, which would have been an opportunity to provide justice to people.

How does the hon. member reconcile blocking the decriminalization of simple drug possession, while understanding all the impacts this has on our community when it comes to extended sentencing?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, we worked with the NDP on every amendment its members put forward. This was not one of them, but I will say that, with respect to this item, we have to respect that every province has its individual jurisdiction.

**An hon member:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Madam Speaker, we did do it in B.C. because we had co-operation working with the British Columbia government. What we need to be able to do is work with every province. We cannot just impose this upon provinces without the opportunity for provinces to prepare a plan and prepare for what they are going to do. That would be irresponsible. Frankly, that would be completely disrespecting our obligations under division of powers.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I just want to remind the member that he had an opportunity to ask the question and he should take the opportunity to listen to the response without interrupting.

It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the motion.

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

• (1125)

[*English*]

The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

**Ms. Lianne Rood:** Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

• (1155)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The question is on the motion. Shall I dispense?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 142*)

### YEAS

#### Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney
Blois	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cornier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Garneau
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan

Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	McPherson
Mendès	Medicino
Miao	Miller
Morrice	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh	Sorbara
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thompson	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Virani
Weiler	Wilkinson
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zuberi — 170

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### NAYS

#### Members

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Carrie
Chambers
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont
Doherty
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Findlay
Gallant
Gaudreau
Genuis
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek

*Government Orders*

Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
MacKenzie	Maguire
Martel	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Plamondon	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shiple
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer— 140

**PAIRED**

## Members

Anand	Boissonnault
Dowdall	Fast
Guilbeault	Hoback
Jeneroux	Joly
Ng	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzer— 12

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

## REPORT STAGE

The House resumed from June 1 consideration of Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I would like to remind members who are in the chamber that if they wish to have conversations, they should please take them out of the chamber so we can get to the orders of the day.

We will resume debate with the hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake.

**Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here today and certainly, it is a plea-

sure to speak in the House of Commons. It is nice to see you again, as well.

I stand today to speak to the utter hypocrisy of the Liberal government and to shine a light on the utter disrespect for law-abiding Canadians and victims of crime. The government, with the prop-up support of the NDP, is attempting to push through Bill C-5, which would see the removal of mandatory minimum sentences for serious criminal offences in this country. Let me be clear on this. The Liberals are eliminating mandatory prison time for criminals who commit robbery with a firearm, weapons trafficking and drive-by shootings.

The Liberals' argument is that they are doing this because they feel these laws are unfair. I cannot make this up. What would the victims of these crimes consider unfair? I surely think they would feel that the person or persons who traumatized them through violent acts now being set free by the Liberal government is what is actually unfair.

Can members imagine being the victim of a drive-by shooting, losing a loved one or being robbed or held at gunpoint? Let us imagine this. These are the mandatory sentences that the government is trying to get rid of. The Liberals are more interested in standing up for criminals than actually defending our communities. The blatant hypocrisy is apparent with the fact that they willingly want to let gun crime perpetrators free sooner so that they can go out into our communities and wreak havoc again, and yet, they stand in righteous defence of enacting gun laws in this country that only serve to punish law-abiding citizens.

Let us look at some of the offences for which the Liberals feel the punishment is unfair. Bill C-5 would eliminate a number of mandatory minimums relating to gun crimes. Here they are: robbery with a firearm; extortion with a firearm; weapons trafficking; discharging a firearm with intent; using a firearm in commission of offences; and possession for the purpose of weapons trafficking.

When we hear the list out loud, as parliamentarians we must ask ourselves, is this seriously what the government wants for Canadians? Can a government seriously think that mandatory sentences are unfair for these types of crimes? We might ask ourselves if we are actually living in Canada or if any of this is real to begin with. Sadly, this is real and the members of this House have to stand and speak to this. Quite frankly, it is making our country unrecognizable.

The Liberal government believes the sentences are unfair. That is how it is putting it. The Liberals have no concern for the victims of these crimes. Their only concern is actually for the criminals who perpetrated the acts to begin with.

There are a few other examples of who the Liberal government feels are being mistreated by the justice system. The Liberals would eliminate six mandatory minimums in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act that target drug dealers. Here they are: trafficking or possession for the purpose of trafficking; importing and exporting or possession for the purpose of exporting; production of a substance schedule I or II. Let me say that last one again: production of a substance schedule I or II. Examples here would be heroin, cocaine, fentanyl and crystal meth.

If I were not standing here as the member of Parliament for the great riding of Miramichi—Grand Lake and I was actually home in the community, maybe at Tim Hortons having a coffee, upon hearing this, I would think that it had to be wrong and there could be no way that any of this was true. What government could ever think that someone who produces a poison like crystal meth should be considered treated unfairly because they had to serve a mandatory sentence for their crime?

• (1215)

Crystal meth is pure poison. It is creating rot and decay in every community, including all across rural Canada. The problem is so vast in the region of Miramichi that the public is left scratching their heads on a good day. Law enforcement clearly does not have an answer for it at present. It is very complicated. This issue is really complicating life in Canada. How can we not give the people who produce it mandatory sentences? They are just going to keep doing it.

The members opposite who vote for this bill should be utterly ashamed when they go back to their home communities knowing the plague and rot of crystal meth abuse is rampant across the country. It would be in their backyards too, because it is everywhere in this country. The evil individuals who prey on their fellow man with the production of this drug should do every minute of time we can give them to keep them off our streets and hopefully keep them from enslaving more people with this highly addictive poison.

Canadians will have to try to mentally process how the government can feel that a meth producer is being treated unfairly. At the same time they also must process how the government feels about other criminals. Again, I want to say that as members of the opposition, we are obviously not supporting this. We want people who are going to produce these types of poison to be behind bars, because that is where they should be, and if you are going to commit crimes with weapons and firearms, then you need to have mandatory sentences as well.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I will remind the hon. member that I have no intention of committing such crimes.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Brantford—Brant

**Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague referenced Bill C-5 and how it would impact the trafficking of very serious drugs like fentanyl, carfentanil, cocaine and crystal meth. Bill C-5 would take away the mandatory minimum penalties, and it would also open up the possibility for conditional sentence considerations and house arrest.

Knowing what we know about drug traffickers plying their deadly trade in the comfort of their own homes, how do you feel the government's narrative with respect to community safety is now being compromised?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** To the hon. member, this is just a reminder that I do not have feelings in this debate.

The hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Madam Speaker, that is really the crux of it.

### *Government Orders*

The people who make this poison are not always the ones who go out and distribute it. If we are letting the people who make it sit at home on house arrest, we can guess what they are going to do. They are going to continue making it. Then they are going to continue finding new people to sell it. Then more and more Canadians are going to become addicted to things like fentanyl and crystal meth.

I think there is an ideological difference in what our sides of the floor are saying, but I ask why, in this country, we would be protecting criminals and the production of things like crystal meth. We have to put them in jail. That is where they belong.

• (1220)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, at points in my hon. colleague's speech, and he may have misspoken, he seemed to suggest that Bill C-5 would mean there are no punishments for these horrific crimes.

I support Bill C-5. As a matter of fact, as the member will know, I put forward amendments to include other crimes that now have mandatory minimum sentences.

The key point here, and it has been taken up by governments around the world, is that mandatory minimums are not a deterrent to violent crime. They have perverse results, in that they promote the district attorneys and prosecutors having more power than judges, in that they are able to force plea deals, because the mandatory minimums are so severe and a threat to people who have not been shown to be guilty of the crime.

We are looking here at making criminal justice fairer and at ensuring the punishment fits the crime, but no one is suggesting these violent criminals should not be punished. We think that judges should decide.

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Madam Speaker, here is a scenario. If a criminal who has committed a robbery with a firearm is put on house arrest, he could sneak out the window, take out his gun again and rob again. Why would we do that? If we put him in jail, he would not have access to his gun and he would not be able to get outside and rob another person.

What we are saying here is very simple. We cannot have these types of criminals out there, giving them options and new opportunities to commit the same crimes that they continue to commit. Basically, the government is looking past the victims, because it is the victims who will pay the price.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's opinion. I think the best way to fight crime is often through education. This applies to both issues Bill C-5 deals with and, moreover, to young offenders, those who have already committed a crime, to make them understand the consequences of their actions.

The Conservative strategy is to treat them like criminals. When we look at the statistics in western Canada, compared to Quebec, we can see that the Quebec approach, namely social reintegration, works better.

Why should we not be looking at this from the perspective of educating people to understand the consequences of their crimes, rather than a criminalization perspective? I cannot get my head around that.

[English]

**Mr. Jake Stewart:** Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague on one point: education is key. It is key in our school systems. It is key from the parents on down. It is going to be a key part of anybody's life. However, we are not just talking about young offenders here. We are talking about offenders in general.

We have to make sure that people know there is a price to pay if they are going to take their gun out and rob somebody or make crystal meth in our society. We have to have very strict punishments for these offences.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-5, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, which returns to the House after having been studied by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Today, I propose to focus my remarks on the very important changes that the bill proposes to make to the conditional sentence regime in the Criminal Code. What we have seen consistently throughout the debate on this bill is that there remain some significant misunderstandings about the important function served by conditional sentence orders, or CSOs, in our society. In order to explain the importance of Bill C-5's amendments in this area, I would like to take a moment to speak about how and why CSOs came to be.

CSOs allow an offender to serve a term of imprisonment of less than two years in the community under strict conditions, including house arrest, curfew and court-mandated treatment for offences that are not punishable by a mandatory term of imprisonment. They were enacted by Parliament in 1996 in response to the well-documented problem of the over-incarceration of indigenous people. The aim of the CSO regime was to promote the protection of the public by seeking to separate the most serious offenders from the community, while providing that less serious offenders could remain in the community if they adhered to important conditions.

Amendments to the Criminal Code over the subsequent 15 years, however, significantly restricted the availability of CSOs. They were made unavailable for all offences punishable by maximum terms of imprisonment of 14 years or more, as well as some offences prosecuted by indictment and punishable by a maximum term of 10 years of imprisonment. The reform also introduced a list

of ineligible offences to the CSO regime, including such offences as non-violent property crime.

It is uncontroversial at this point to acknowledge that systemic racism and discrimination in the criminal justice system have resulted in the overrepresentation of indigenous people, Black persons and members of marginalized communities in the criminal justice system. One only needs to look at the country's track record to see the pressing need for change. Indeed, recent data from the Office of the Correctional Investigator demonstrates that indigenous people make up 32% of the federal prison population despite accounting for less than 5% of the total population. Indigenous women, meanwhile, account for 48% of the population in women's prisons.

Members of the community who are overrepresented in the criminal justice system have long called for reform to address the systemic racism and discrimination they face at all stages, from their first contact with law enforcement through to sentencing. Indeed, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Parliamentary Black Caucus have specifically called on the government to revisit the restrictions placed on the conditional sentencing regime in the Criminal Code.

Bill C-5 would make more offences eligible for community-based sentences while maintaining the importance of public safety in all circumstances. Let me repeat that last statement, as this point is too frequently lost in discussions about the proposed amendments. Removing these restrictions on the availability of CSOs will not negatively impact public safety. This is because in order for a court to impose a CSO, it must first be satisfied that this sentence would not endanger the safety of the community. If the offender represents a danger to public safety, then the court is precluded from imposing a CSO.

In addition, a court must be satisfied that a sentence of less than two years is appropriate in the circumstances, and that the community-based sentence would be consistent with the purpose and principles of sentencing set out in the Criminal Code. That is the law, and the proposed amendments would not change that.

• (1225)

Moreover, the amendments proposed in Bill C-5 would not indiscriminately render all offences eligible for the CSOs. Currently, all offences that carry mandatory minimum prison sentences in the Criminal Code are ineligible for a conditional sentence, and that would not change. Similarly, all offences that are linked to terrorism or organized crime, for which the maximum penalty is 10 years of imprisonment or more when prosecuted by way of indictment, are ineligible for a CSO. This too will not change. The bill would also render the offences of torture, attempted murder and advocating genocide ineligible for a CSO.

The evidence shows us that allowing low-risk offenders who do not jeopardize public safety to serve their sentence in the community under strict conditions is more effective at reducing criminality than institutional incarceration. This is because serving a sentence that maintains an offender's access to employment, family, community and health-related support systems allows them to avoid the stigma and trauma of a prison sentence and provides them with a prosocial alternative to criminal offending once their sentence is complete. Indeed, evidence gathered after the original enactment of CSOs supports this finding.

Within the first few years of the implementation of CSOs, recidivism rates declined and incarceration rates decreased by 13%. During the bill's study at the justice committee, the committee heard from experts and stakeholders in the field of criminal justice in Canada. Many of these witnesses, including the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers, the HIV Legal Network, Dr. Julie Desrosiers of the faculty of law at Université Laval, the Criminal Lawyers' Association and the Canadian Bar Association, indicated that these reforms to the CSO regime represented a step in the right direction. I could not agree more. I firmly believe that these amendments strike the right balance between providing alternatives to incarceration where appropriate, while maintaining and prioritizing public safety where serious offending is at issue.

This legislation is an important component of the government's ongoing efforts to reduce the overrepresentation of indigenous people, Black persons and members of marginalized communities in our criminal justice system, and would afford more opportunities for rehabilitation in appropriate cases. I urge all members to support these important reforms.

• (1230)

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to speak today to Bill C-5.

In the same month the Liberal government introduces legislation that specifically targets law-abiding firearms owners, the House is now debating a bill that eliminates mandatory minimums for robbery with a firearm, extortion with a firearm, willfully importing or exporting illegal firearms, discharging a firearm with intent, using a firearm in the commission of offences, possession of an illegal firearm and possession of a firearm obtained illegally.

As people say, we cannot make this up. No one in my constituency has called me to tell me they want mandatory minimums repealed for these serious crimes. People are furious, and rightly so.

As Sergeant Michael Rowe of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police said at the justice committee, "The police in Canada support the primary objectives of mandatory minimum penalties to ensure consistency in sentencing, to protect the public and to discourage others from engaging in similar conduct." He also mentioned that these mandatory minimums "hold significant value when addressing public safety and gang-related violence: the use of a firearm or imitation firearm in the commission of an offence".

The government is not even listening to the recent report published by the public safety committee right here in Parliament. Recommendation 11 states:

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That the Government of Canada recognize that serious crimes involving firearms and drug trafficking should bear serious penalties given the threat to public safety, and that violent offenders should be kept off our streets to protect the public, while a public health response should be adopted to deal with people suffering from substance abuse.

I have always believed that serious violent offences that are committed with firearms deserve mandatory prison time. It is astonishing that the Liberals want to weaken the punishment of these crimes in Canada. I also have grave concerns with the Liberals' proposal to allow criminals to serve house arrest rather than jail time for a number of offences, including those involving sexual assault, human trafficking and kidnapping.

This bill is soft on crime and puts communities and victims at risk. The sad irony of the Liberals' plan to make our streets safer is, in fact, going after trained Canadian firearms owners, while at the same time reducing penalties for those who commit violent gun crimes and sell hard drugs. Bill C-5 is sending the wrong message to criminals and organized crime.

I doubt any of these criminals are watching CPAC at this very moment, but I can assure members that law-abiding firearms owners are watching. The government is insulting hundreds of thousands of law-abiding firearms owners, who are being blamed for the government's lack of action to tackle gun smuggling and organized crime.

Gun violence has gone up significantly over the past seven years of the Liberal government. That is a fact. It is also a fact that most guns used in violent crime are smuggled in from the United States. According to CBSA's departmental results report, almost 20,000 illegal firearms and prohibited weapons were confiscated before coming into Canada. Those are just the ones that were confiscated, and just the illegal ones we know about. No one knows how many slipped through the cracks and were used in a violent crime. Gun smugglers and gun traffickers are directly responsible for the murder of too many innocent Canadians.

As the president of the National Police Federation said at the justice committee, "Bill C-5 strikes down some mandatory minimum penalties related to weapons trafficking and firearms offences. This is inconsistent with the expressed intent of the government to reduce firearms violence in Canada." He went on to say that if the Liberals are going to repeal these mandatory minimums, they must provide "additional deterrence measures to address criminal activity, such as providing more resources to stop the import of illegal drugs and firearms at the border."

*Government Orders*

• (1235)

Through Bill C-5, the Liberals are proposing to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for the very crimes that are putting illegal firearms on our streets in the first place. Tell me how the Liberals can justify placing heavy restrictions on law-abiding citizens while removing them for violent criminals on the streets. The short answer is they cannot. Let us not forget that last year, the same Liberals voted down a Conservative bill that proposed making the punishment harsher for criminals using smuggled guns.

I received an email from John Schneiderbanger the other day, who asked me to share his comments in the House of Commons. Before any of my Liberal colleagues start smearing John as some sort of firearm lobbyist, let me tell his story.

John proudly served in the Canadian Armed Forces and rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel. He was posted to CFB Shilo, which I am honoured to say is in my constituency, where he served as base commander. He is a firearms expert and has decades of experience and a wealth of knowledge of which we should take heed.

While Bill C-5 repeals mandatory minimums for actual criminals, the Liberals are going after sport shooters in his case. If the Liberals get their way, they will be impacting legitimate shooting sports such as Cowboy Shooting Action, International Practical Shooting Confederation, 3-Gun, IDPA and Cowboy Mounted Shooting.

Many of these competitors participate in high levels of competition, some of them around the world, and there are governing bodies at the provincial, national and world levels. They are legitimate and organized sports that are recognized around the world and would no longer exist in Canada due to the Liberal government's inability to focus on correct root causes of violent crime committed by criminals with illegal guns.

As John said, these shooting sports will wither away quickly as the current membership becomes older and leave the sport, as other sport shooters cannot replace the competition handguns over time. No new members will be able to join these activities, as there will be no legal handguns available to acquire.

If the Liberals will not take my advice, they will at least listen to one of Canada's finest, Mr. Schneiderbanger, who also knows the Firearms Act inside and out.

Along with eliminating sentences for gun crimes, this Liberal bill would eliminate mandatory prison time for serious drug-related offences. These include sentences for drug trafficking as well as importing, exporting and producing drugs such as heroin, fentanyl and crystal meth.

Canada is in the midst of an opioid crisis. We all know that. In 2020, the opioid crisis claimed the lives of 6,306 people. That is the equivalent of 17 opioid deaths per day. The volume of police calls related to suspected overdoses has also been increasing. As of right now, police services across the country are dealing with an average of 687 calls per month of suspected overdoses. One would think the Liberals would have proposed some solutions in the latest budget to help, but they did not offer a single new dollar to assist police services with this increased demand.

It gets worse. The Liberal platform promised \$250 million in 2021-22 and \$625 million in 2022-23 for a Canadian mental health transfer, but none of those dollars have materialized. While provinces and municipalities are in dire need of help, once again they were promised action but given platitudes. My Conservative colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin has repeatedly asked why the Liberals did not keep this promise, and all he has heard back is useless talking points.

I know my Liberal colleagues care about this issue; I just do not know why they are not holding their own government's feet to the fire. Why are they letting the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance get away with this broken promise and then voting in favour of Bill C-5, which is going to lessen the penalties for the gangs and organized crime that are peddling the opioids?

I want my Liberal colleagues to know how bad drug-related offences are under their watch. Cocaine trafficking is up 24% since 2016. Trafficking of drugs other than cocaine and cannabis is up 73% since 2016.

Contrary to Liberal talking points, Bill C-5 is not about reducing mandatory minimum sentences for simple possession. In fact, mandatory minimums for simple possession do not exist.

• (1240)

In closing, I want to say that it is unfortunate that the Liberals on the committee used their majority and turned the report into a one-page report that was void of any substance—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I have to interrupt the hon. member. The time is up.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I note that my good friend was not at committee for the study on Bill C-5, but there was at least one amendment that we did accept, and we worked, I would say, collaboratively to make sure that we strengthened the bill, so I reject the premise that we did not work together on this measure.

I want to ask him about the notion of systemic racism and whether he thinks it exists within the criminal justice system. If so, what would his solution be for that, and does he not feel that this bill addresses one of the core issues that we are trying to deal with?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his commitment to the justice committee, which has been dealing with this issue. All I want to say on that is that the government is targeting the wrong sector of people with this particular bill.

I have given the numbers here in regard to the drug crisis in Canada. I want to say that I was going to add that Bill C-5 is not about reducing mandatory minimum sentences for simple possession. In fact, mandatory minimums for simple possession do not even exist. We also know that in constituencies such as mine, the RCMP is spread very thin, and I mentioned the lack of resources for policing.

My colleague from Lakeland passed her motion to conduct a study on rural crime, and that is the one on which the Liberals on the committee used their majority and turned the report into a one-page report that was void of any substance.

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, it certainly was not the idea of the century for the government to introduce within Bill C-5 two completely different problems, but my colleague did not say much about the issue of diversion measures for addiction. I want to know what he thinks about the fact that we are criminalizing people with addictions. Does he really think that this is the answer to ending the opioid crisis, for example, when this same approach has been used for about 50 years?

I would like his thoughts on that.

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Madam Speaker, in response to some questions from my previous colleague and from our side of the House, I am very much in favour of using education as a better opportunity to be able to educate persons today in regard to the use of drugs.

However, when we go ahead and license fentanyl at the levels that they are talking about today, at 2.5 grams, we know that many people can be killed by that amount of fentanyl. It is not the same as 2.5 grams of many of the other drugs that are out there today.

I think education is a great opportunity to be able to do that, but in the meantime, people who are trafficking and selling these drugs illegally, which is what is happening, or making them available to our youth on the streets should be penalized.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I believe I heard the hon. member suggest that this was targeting the wrong demographic. I will set that aside for a moment and ask the hon. member if he would least concede that the tough-on-crime war against drugs has been an absolute and abject failure and that this bill at least provides some relief through expungement so that people who are caught with simple possession do not have to spend the entirety of their lives with the stigma of having a record.

Would he at least not concede that expunging non-violent simple possession charges is the right, appropriate and just thing to do?

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Madam Speaker, a mandatory minimum does not mean life in prison. I want to make that very clear to my colleague who was just indicating that, which perhaps would mis-

lead people into thinking that this is what this bill is all about. I will just leave it at that as well.

I am talking about those who are trafficking in these drugs, and drugs are only a part of this. We know that there is smuggling of drugs just as there is smuggling of firearms, and this bill does nothing to stop either one of them.

**Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Madam Speaker, today we are debating Bill C-5 at report stage. I am profoundly disappointed as a parliamentarian and deeply ashamed as a former Crown attorney that this seriously flawed, reckless and dangerous bill has made it this far in the process.

I left behind a proud and rewarding legal career as a public servant for the Province of Ontario, a career defined by holding criminals accountable for their actions, which ranged from mischief all the way through to and including first degree murder. It was a career further defined by advocating for victims' rights, which is a concept that is completely alien to this virtue-signalling government. Neither this bill nor Bill C-21 makes any reference to the rights and protection of victims.

I was frustrated as a Crown attorney that the judicial system was out of balance. The proverbial pendulum over my career was significantly shifting in favour of the accused at the expense of protecting victims of crime. There must be a balance.

The government will repeatedly make statements in the House that it cares deeply for victims and that their rights matter, but it is simply talk with no action. An example of this lip service is the fact the government has not replaced the federal ombudsman for victims of crime, a position left vacant since last October 1. It is shameful.

It is time to dispel the myths and misinformation coming from the government whenever its members speak about this bill.

Number one, this is not legislation targeted at low-risk offenders. Use of a firearm in the commission of an offence, possession of an unauthorized firearm, possession of a firearm with ammunition, weapons trafficking, importing and exporting of firearms, discharging a firearm with intent, reckless discharge of a firearm and robbery with a firearm are indeed extremely serious violent offences for which judges across this country routinely impose significant jail sentences and often prison on the offenders.

These are not the types of people described by our Attorney General when the bill was introduced. We all remember that story: We are to imagine a young man who has too many pops on a Saturday night and decides to pick up a loaded gun and shoot into a barn. According to our Attorney General, we should feel sorry for this individual, as it would be a cruel and unusual punishment to impose a mandatory minimum penalty.

### *Government Orders*

Number two, this is not legislation that would reverse former PM Harper's Safe Streets and Communities Act. Several of the charges outlined in Bill C-5 include mandatory minimum penalties that were introduced by Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1977 and Jean Chrétien in 1995, two Liberal majority governments.

Third, according to the government and supported by its NDP partners and Green Party members, mandatory minimums are ineffective in reducing crime or keeping our communities safe. The simple fact is that if they actually believed this, instead of virtue signalling to Canadians, they would table legislation to remove all mandatory minimums. There are 53 offences that would remain in the Criminal Code if this bill passes. This includes impaired operation of a vehicle. Apparently it is important to hold drunk drivers accountable while allowing criminals and thugs to terrorize our communities by shooting up our streets.

The fourth point is that according to the government, courts from across this country, including appellate courts and the Supreme Court of Canada, are striking down mandatory minimum penalties as being contrary to the charter. For reasons previously described, mandatory minimums introduced by previous Liberal governments have been upheld by various courts for over 40 years.

Five, this is not legislation targeting people charged with simple possession. Bill C-5 would eliminate six mandatory minimums under the CDSA, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. These include the very serious offences of trafficking, importing, exporting and production of controlled substances. Drugs such as fentanyl and carfentanyl are the most deadly and lethal form of street drugs, and an amount the size of a grain of salt is capable of killing an elephant. These drugs are not serious enough for the government. These are the same drugs that are causing an opioid crisis that results in daily overdoses and deaths. Do these killer criminals deserve mercy from the Liberal government? What has this country become?

Finally, this legislation is supposed to address racism and reduce the over-incarceration of Black Canadians and indigenous offenders.

• (1250)

The Alberta minister of justice, Kaycee Madu, a Black Canadian, noted:

While Ottawa's new justice bill...contains some reasonable measures, I am deeply concerned about the decision to gut tough sentencing provisions for gun crimes...

Removing tough, mandatory penalties for actual gun crimes undermines the very minority communities that are so often victimized by brazen gun violence. I also find it disingenuous for Ottawa to exploit a genuine issue like systemic racism to push through their soft-on-crime bills.

I have prosecuted in the trenches for close two decades, unlike the Attorney General and members of the Liberal government. I can state on authority that the overriding sentencing consideration associated with the crimes relating to Bill C-5 are denunciation, deterrence and separation from society. In other words, it does not matter one's gender, ethnicity or race. Upon conviction, criminals are going to jail, period. It is time for the government to be honest with Canadians and accept that Bill C-5 will not substantially address the over-incarceration issue.

Throughout the entire time this bill has been debated, I and other colleagues, most notably the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, have argued that there is a compromise for the government to consider. A constitutional exemption to all the charges outlined in the bill would give trial judges the legal authority to exempt criminals from a mandatory minimum penalty if they belong to a vulnerable population that is overrepresented in the criminal justice system and who are disadvantaged with regard to sentencing. This exemption would preserve the mandatory minimum penalties, but give judges the flexibility to craft an appropriate sentence. My amendment to this bill at committee was summarily dismissed by the Liberal chair as outside the scope of the study, which is shameful.

Brantford police chief Rob Davis, the only indigenous leader of a municipal police service in Ontario, testified at committee: "With Bill C-5 and the proposed changes now, we are going to see sentencing become a joke". He continued, "With...turning sentences into conditional sentences...the justice system is being brought into disrepute. People will operate with impunity and the victims' rights are going to be given away [for] the rights of the criminal."

Chief Davis also said, "Victims of communities will live in fear of gun violence and fearful of retaliation by armed criminals, and people will continue to overdose".

The committee also heard from Chief Darren Montour from the Six Nations Police Service, whose testimony was clear. He stated:

...proposed conditional sentences for violent offences will not deter offenders from committing further crimes. We are not in a position to continuously monitor sentenced offenders to ensure their compliance with...restrictions handed down by the courts. Police services across the country, and especially those within indigenous communities, are significantly understaffed. We are continuously asked to do more with less, and we cannot sustain this workload.

He also stated that he can appreciate the statistics regarding the over-incarceration issue, "but along with the rights of offenders, victims and victims' families deserve rights as well."

Hundreds of Canadians from coast to coast signed the petition on my website, which I recently presented in the House. They called on the government to immediately withdraw Bill C-5. Here is a news release for the Liberal government: Canadians are terrified at the prospect that criminals convicted of sex assault and kidnapping will also enjoy serving that sentence in the comfort of their homes, the very same homes in which they committed their crimes. It is deeply shameful.

The number one priority for the federal government is to keep Canadians safe. The government has been derelict in its responsibility.

*Government Orders*

I, together with my Conservative caucus members, will always stand on the side of victims and keeping our communities safe by holding criminals accountable for their actions. I will be very strongly voting against this bill, and I encourage all members in the House to do the same.

• (1255)

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's background and the points he is making in his speech, but I have a couple of quick points.

First, currently the minimum mandatory sentence for the repeated smuggling of tobacco is four years, yet for most of the firearms offences is one year, so there is an imbalance there in the system. Second, we have seen many times in British Columbia Crown counsel refusing to approve charges simply because the courts are too full and people have walked. Third, if I were the Minister of Justice, I would make dealing fentanyl the crime of attempted murder.

That said, I would ask the hon. member whether or not he trusts the judgment of judges to hand down appropriate sentences in the serious situations he mentions.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Madam Speaker, I reflect on this often, and I often hear from government members, NDP members and Green members that we Conservative members can all calm down because the bill would keep communities safe. They say we can trust our judges to always do the right thing. However, judges come from various backgrounds, which is why we have a myriad of different judgements from across this country, from coast to coast to coast. There is no consistency in sentencing.

In answer to the question, as a former prosecutor over the last two decades and previous to that as a defence counsel, I have repeatedly seen abuses by defence counsel who were properly retained with illegal funds from trafficking, etc., who shop for a judge, as there are judges who are more lenient than others. Bill C-5—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We will continue with questions and comments. The hon. member for Montcalm.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I will try to remain calm. I am not sure I properly understood the intervention of my colleague, who cynically described people with addictions as criminals who deserve mercy from the government.

Is the Conservative member aware of what is happening around the world in the fight against addiction? Does he know how many heroin addicts there were in Portugal before diversion programs and decriminalization were brought in? There were 100,000. Today, there are only 15,000.

I would like the member to clarify what he meant and drop the cynicism toward people addicted to heroin or other substances.

• (1300)

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Madam Speaker, perhaps it was lost in translation, but that particular statement in my speech was a rhetorical

question put to the government because that is the type of language the government is using.

The focus of my speech was not on those who are struggling with drug addiction. Our entire focus as a Conservative caucus, even in our platform in the last election, is all about taking steps to address rehabilitation. The focus of my speech and the focus of our opposition is on traffickers who are encouraging these individuals to continue their addictions, and that is where our focus ought to be.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention, but there is one thing I will flag for him. I found it very interesting that he chose to use a quotation from the past justice minister of Alberta Kaycee Madu, considering that Mr. Madu lost his position as the justice minister because he phoned the police chief after getting a ticket he did not like. He seems like an interesting person to refer to when we talk about justice.

However, more importantly, would representatives from the Conservative Party be prepared to support the calls from other leaders, mayors, health experts, health care providers, frontline care providers and police in Alberta to support the decriminalization of small amounts of narcotics? Would that be something the member would be supportive of?

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Madam Speaker, again, what we are continually hearing from the NDP and the Greens is very frustrating. They want to change the story and turn the page on what Bill C-5 is all about.

Bill C-5, for the last time, is not about simple possession. This is a news release to the House: It is not. I am not going to respond—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles has the floor.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Madam Speaker, today we are discussing Bill C-5, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drug and Substances Act, at report stage. It is sponsored by the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, the current Minister of Justice.

Bill C-5 acts simultaneously on two complementary fronts: It repeals mandatory minimum penalties, or MMPs, for certain offences in the Criminal Code and establishes diversion measures for simple drug possession offences. Indirectly, Bill C-5 also seeks to counter systemic racism by addressing the overrepresentation of Black and indigenous people in the prison system.

My colleagues may know from my background that I was a criminologist. Far from me to claim I am an expert in the matter, but I can say that establishing diversion measures for these offences and repealing mandatory minimum penalties is fully consistent with many of my views and opinions.

### *Government Orders*

Before I get into the substance of my remarks, let us define the important terms we are using today. Too many people, including most of us, confuse decriminalization, legalization and diversion. First, mandatory minimum penalties are legislated sentencing floors where the minimum punishment is predetermined by law. I am reiterating this because I believe that there is some confusion in our colleagues' remarks. Second, decriminalization is the act of removing from the Criminal Code an action or omission that was considered a criminal offence, or the act of reducing the seriousness of an offence or removing from it any of its so-called criminal or penal nature. Diversion means the suspension, in the normal course of events, of criminal justice mechanisms at every step of the decision-making process. These can include incidents settled within the community, cases not referred to the justice system by the police, conciliation before reaching trial, and so on.

Overall, the Bloc Québécois supports the provisions proposed in Bill C-5. However, there are a few points about which we have serious reservations, but I will get to that later.

First, with respect to mandatory minimum penalties, the Bloc Québécois advocates an approach that involves rehabilitating offenders, a term our Conservative colleagues do not appear to be familiar with, reducing crime and easing the burden on our penal and justice systems.

MMPs, which became harsher under the Harper Conservative government, are totally useless. No empirical study has ever shown that these penalties reduce crime. First, they increase the burden on the criminal justice and correctional systems. Second, they cost taxpayers a fortune. Third, they undermine any chances of reintegration for many minor offenders after their first offence for a minor crime, such as simple drug possession.

Although we agree with the principle, we must point out this is not the right time to eliminate MMPs for firearms offences. As I stand here addressing the House, a number of cities in Canada and Quebec are experiencing a veritable epidemic of firearms, mainly because of the government's inaction when it comes to border control. Without the firm and concerted action of the federal government to stem the illegal importation of firearms across the border, repealing MMPs for firearms offences is sending the wrong message.

With respect to diversion, obviously the Bloc Québécois supports it, and I am personally very eager to see it happen, because I firmly believe in the concept of rehabilitation. Diversion considers drug problems to be mental health and public health issues. That is important. Diversion measures are intended for persons with addictions, those who would normally be prosecuted for simple drug possession under Canada's Criminal Code.

• (1305)

The aim of diversion is to remove individuals struggling with problematic substance use, and who do not pose a risk to society, from the justice system.

It is important to understand that diversion is not inconsistent with criminal prosecution. Diversion simply offers offenders the choice of a different path, an alternative to prison. Options for diversion include treatment information sessions, fines, community

service and many more. Diversion is therefore not a solution to the criminality associated with the sale of illicit drugs; it is a solution to social and public health problems.

Earlier, my colleague referred to Portugal, which gives us one of the best examples of the benefits of diversion. Faced with a serious drug problem in 2001, that is the path Portugal opted for.

Diversion led to a decline in drug use. Incarceration rates for drug-related offences decreased as well, and the number of fatal overdoses like those we are seeing in British Columbia, for example, fell sharply. Another benefit was that the incidence of HIV-AIDS among drug users also plummeted.

I think it is crucial to point out this achievement, which is attributable to a combination of diversion measures and Portugal's massive investment in health care. The current bill does not contain anything about this second component, namely investment in health care.

I would like to remind members that every Canadian province, including Quebec, is asking the federal level to cover 35% of their health spending so that they can support their health care systems, which are in dire need of funding. Another good reason to increase health transfers, as Quebec wants and is calling for, is to again move towards adopting an approach that would closely follow Portugal's.

In short, the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-5. We support the introduction of the principle of diversion for simple drug possession offences. We also support the repeal of some mandatory minimum penalties. I say "some" mandatory minimum penalties to avoid falling into demagoguery.

However, I will reiterate that the government is making a mistake when it proposes to repeal mandatory minimum penalties for firearms offences without doing anything about the source of the problem, namely the free movement of thousands of illegal firearms across our porous border with the United States.

I will therefore vote for Bill C-5, but if the government really wants to make a difference, if it wants to ensure that repealing mandatory minimum penalties and establishing diversion measures will yield all the benefits we can expect, it must do two things. First, it must immediately implement all of the measures proposed by my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia to reduce firearms violence. Then, it must immediately increase health transfers to the provinces to cover at least 35% of their spending.

If it does that, I can guarantee the Liberal Party that Bill C-5 will have an extremely positive impact. If it continues to turn a deaf ear to the Bloc Québécois's proposals, it will once again have missed a great opportunity.

*Government Orders*

• (1310)

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned Portugal. He raised the issue of the financial resources that must support such a process. João Goulão was the author of this reform in Portugal. In response to someone who asked if they should go ahead with this diversion, or decriminalization, as he called it, he replied that if the means were not there, and if the necessary funding was not provided for frontline resources, it would be better to leave the problem to the justice system.

I would like to ask my colleague if he feels the government is willing to inject the necessary funds to support a reform seeking to resolve such fundamental problems as the opioid crisis.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I do not get the feeling that this government is willing to do that.

We often say that the government prefers to react rather than act. That is often the case. The government does not walk the talk. The community organizations and semi-governmental agencies that could and should be taking over for the prison system when it comes to minimum penalties need money to do their work.

[*English*]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the bill before us raises some really fundamental questions about what is effective in terms of criminal justice. Of course, those of us on this side of the House in the NDP believe that the evidence is crystal clear that mandatory minimums are simply not effective in helping to reduce crime. One thing I think that we are well aware of is the very high degree of addiction and mental health issues among inmates in federal correctional institutions. In fact, we did a study about 10 years ago at the public safety committee, and found that about 70% of inmates in federal systems suffered from an addiction or mental health problem.

I am just wondering if my hon. colleague has any thoughts on whether it might be a more effective public policy, and help keep the public safe, if we directed resources toward trying to help people deal with their mental health and addictions issues while they were serving at the pleasure of the Crown, as they say, as opposed to simply making them stay longer in prison without any access to services.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague. There is an obvious link between mental health and serious substance abuse problems. Unfortunately, the prison system is grappling with a large population with mental health issues because far too many people are being incarcerated for minor offences.

Minor sentences do not solve anything. They are a waste of time for everyone, including the people directly affected by these problems. These minor offences could be dealt with by means other than prison sentences. They could be dealt with by society, with a view to rehabilitation, as I said before.

To pick up on my colleague's idea, I also find it unfortunate that the Liberal government often talks about scientific studies and sound evidence, when all of that points to what is being done in Portugal. We need to start reading the scientific literature and lis-

tening to scientists. We need to follow their advice. I spoke about the Liberal government, but the Conservative government is even worse in that regard.

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have already mentioned this here today, but I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts about human trafficking and the material benefit of eliminating minimum sentences.

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Madam Speaker, I had some trouble understanding the question. I apologize for that, but I think it is wonderful that my colleague is making an effort to speak in French, and I commend him.

[*English*]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to stand and speak to Bill C-5 at report stage. I would like to start by thanking all members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for the work they did in reviewing this bill and reporting it back to the House. As a former member of that committee, I know it is no easy task. I used to be a member, back in 2017. The bills that come before the justice committee are usually quite serious in nature. They demand a certain amount of responsibility to take up the task and make sure that the amendments we are making to the Criminal Code have in fact been vetted and that all of the implications of their passage are fully understood.

This being Bill C-5, my remarks today, of course, are going to concentrate on two themes. One is on the question of mandatory minimums and whether they still serve any kind of useful purpose in our criminal justice system. The second theme is on the incredible harm that is a result of Canada's current federal drug policy, and not only the harm that is meted out to people who are arrested and have criminal records that they have to deal with for the rest of their lives, but also the lack of action in tackling the root causes of the opioid crisis that I have heard members from every political party and every region in Canada speak so passionately about.

Bill C-5, like any piece of legislation, is not going to solve those problems by itself and I would argue that much more needs to be done. This is one small step on the path that we need to take, but it is nonetheless a step forward. That is why I will be supporting this bill and ensuring that the Senate receives it so that it can one day make its way to the Governor General's desk and be signed into law.

It is important to set up the context, especially when we are speaking about mandatory minimums. I do not need to argue about the harms that they cause our society. It has been well documented by many, including none other than the Correctional Investigator. The statistics are there, for indigenous, Black and racialized Canadians, on their share of the population in Canada and their extreme overrepresentation in our criminal justice system.

*Government Orders*

What is more is that there is simply no credible evidence that mandatory minimums work in any way to deter crime. That is a fact. I have had to sit in this place through question period after question period, listening to colleagues from the Conservative Party talk and deliberately misstate what is going on with this piece of legislation. The Conservatives are trying to weave a story for Canadians and trying to infect them with fear that with the passage of Bill C-5, somehow every person who is charged with a serious criminal offence is suddenly going to be placed on house arrest or released on the streets. Nothing could be further from the truth. What it speaks to is a distrust, among members of that party, in judges having the ability to make the right decisions for the cases that come before them. Mandatory minimums are a blunt instrument of justice. They do not allow a judge to take in the circumstances of a case and to look at the circumstances of the individual who has been charged with a crime.

Furthermore, in all of the arguments I have heard from Conservatives on this bill, the part they leave out is that even though these sections in the Criminal Code are being amended, the maximum penalties are still in force. While the mandatory minimum penalties are being taken away, many of these serious offences carry prison terms of up to 10 years and of up to 14 years. There is no doubt in my mind that if a repeat offender has committed very serious criminal acts under the sections of the Criminal Code covered by Bill C-5, that person will receive jail time.

A judge's solemn responsibility to society is public safety and ensuring there is justice for the victims of crime. Judges are always balancing society's best interests when a case comes before them. We have to trust them in that process. There is a reason that our legislative branch is separate from the judicial branch.

• (1320)

We have to trust in these men and women who are so very learned in law and who can appreciate all of the fine differences in each case that comes before them. We have to trust that they will always make the right decision. There are ways we can hold our judges to account. There are courts of appeal, and we can continue going up the judicial ladder until we reach the Supreme Court of Canada. I cannot accept the arguments that are being made against mandatory minimums in this place, because they are being made in bad faith.

I want to turn to the main part I really want to hammer out here, which is the important amendments that are being made to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

I was very honoured to stand in this place with my friend, colleague and neighbour, the member for Courtenay—Alberni, and vote in favour of his bill, Bill C-216. It would have essentially decriminalized personal possession. It would have set up a process of expungement. It would have set our country forward on a path of setting up a national strategy to deal with the opioids crisis.

Unfortunately, there were only a few members who were brave enough to stand up for that bold, game-changing policy and trying to put this country on a path forward. Even though we lost that battle, I think that vote and the conversation we had have been important milestones for this country's evolving laws toward drug policy.

I am certain that in the years ahead we are going to see some fundamental reform in this area.

The main thing Bill C-5 would do with respect to our drug laws is set up a declaration of principles. We are at report stage now, but important work was done at committee. I have to take a moment to recognize the amazing and incredible work of my colleague and neighbour to the south, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. His knowledge of law, his expertise in that area and the diligent and hard work he has done at committee resulted in some very substantive amendments to Bill C-5. One of them in particular, although it is not going to be called expungement, is expungement by a different name.

One of the main harms we have had to people who have criminal records for personal possession amounts is that those records follow them throughout life. They can affect one's ability to get into certain lines of work, affect one's ability to rent a home and very severely affect one's ability to travel. The amendments that were made by the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke and accepted by a majority of the committee are essentially going to make sure that Bill C-5 would ensure that after two years those records are sequestered from the main records of that person, and no longer will anyone be able to find those records and hold them against that person.

It is important, and it is certainly not as bold of a step as we would have wanted, but I think it goes to show that this small caucus of New Democrats has been able to make monumental reform to a pretty important government justice bill. I think this is going to leave a lasting mark for people who have been negatively affected by this.

I will conclude by saying that when it comes to mandatory minimums, it is important for us to remember that the Criminal Code is a massive piece of legislation. There are already sections within the Criminal Code, specifically section 718.2, the sentencing principles, that allow a judge to increase or decrease a sentence based on aggravating factors. The sentences that are spelled out in the Criminal Code for the specific sections of Bill C-5, in fact, could be lengthened, if there were aggravating factors. If a crime was committed against a person with a disability or if racial hatred and bias were involved in a crime, judges could take that into account.

I could say much more, but 10 minutes goes by very quickly. I will end by saying that Bill C-5 is a small step. We did our job to make it better. I will be pleased to vote in favour of this bill to send it to the Senate and hopefully into law in the very near future.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's opinion on human trafficking with material benefit.

Is it right for such a serious issue to be buried in the bill? Is this crime, which overwhelmingly affects women and girls, not important?

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Again, Madam Speaker, this is an example of the Conservatives completely ignoring what I just said.

Of course I will acknowledge it is a serious crime, but what my hon. colleague failed to mention is that a judge would have the ability to look at the case before him or her, look at the defendant involved, look at the circumstances of the case, and if it is warranted, levy a hefty prison term against that individual.

I have a counter-question for the member. Why does he and his party have so little faith in the judges? Why do those members not just come clean and say that to Canadians point blank?

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to tell my colleague that I truly appreciated his enlightening speech. We both served on the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying. I want to tell him that I agree with his analysis of the work that judges do, especially with respect to sentencing.

I would like him to tell me about some of the negative effects of minimum sentences with respect to these changes, because minimum sentences do have negative effects.

Can he provide some examples to help us understand why judges should have full responsibility over sentencing, which is the nature of their job?

[English]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Madam Speaker, in my speech, I referenced the statistics, which are there for everyone to see, but I will go even further.

There could be unique circumstances where charges have been levied against an individual who may have been in the wrong place at the wrong time, mixed up with the wrong crowd, and the judge would have no choice on a guilty verdict. The judge may say, "I can see that the circumstances in which you find yourself are markedly different from the people I usually see before me, but my hands are tied and because of this mandatory minimum sentencing provision in the Criminal Code, I have to give you a three-year sentence." It completely binds the hands of the judge.

Justice is not black and white. As much as the Conservatives want to see that it is, it is not black and white. Judges need to have the ability to make sure that the sentence is appropriate to the person before them.

● (1330)

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member gave a thoughtful speech, as thoughtful as his colleague from Courtenay—Alberni and the bill that he had to decriminalize possession of small amounts of drugs. The first reaction to the bill that the House did pass was from Alberta, saying that what was happening in B.C., which was an agreement with B.C., is not good and it will not happen in Alberta.

I would ask the member to reflect on that and Bill C-5, which again attempts to allow local jurisdictions to consider local circumstances and have judges make the appropriate judgment on what kinds of penalties should apply.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Madam Speaker, on the last part, I agree that this is a fundamental reason that Bill C-5 needs to pass, but I will expand on it.

The problem with the Liberals voting down Bill C-216 is that while there may be a jurisdiction like British Columbia which is very open to reaching agreements with the federal government, there will be other jurisdictions like Alberta that refuse to do that. While the agreement with British Columbia is a great thing, what about all the Canadians in other provinces who do not have progressive premiers? They have to wait for the law to be changed and they are out of luck. That is the problem. That is why it is shameful that the Liberals voted against Bill C-216.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, this past December, the Liberal government revived Bill C-5, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

The government has claimed that the purpose of this act is to root out systemic racism in the criminal justice system and address the root causes of substance abuse in light of the worsening opioid crisis. Conservatives have another view. We have outlined the dangers in the government's Bill C-5 with regard to violent criminals, lessening sentences for gun crimes and the removal of mandatory minimum penalties, among other concerns.

The Liberals are eliminating mandatory prison time for criminals who commit robbery with a firearm, weapons trafficking and drive-by shootings. They are doing this because they feel these laws are unfair. They are more interested in standing up for criminals than defending our communities. Tell that to the families of victims in my own riding of South Surrey—White Rock. As a member of Parliament from British Columbia and as a mother, I know illegal drugs are a scourge in our society.

This enactment amends the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to repeal too many mandatory minimum penalties, allowing for a greater use of conditional sentences and establishing diversion measures for simple and first-time drug offences that are already in place. B.C. already has drug courts.

Mandatory minimum sentences are not used for simple possession now; they do not exist. Despite what the Liberal government has said about Bill C-5, the Supreme Court did not declare all mandatory minimums unconstitutional. The courts have struck down some, but these punishments have been on the books for decades. In fact, a majority of the mandatory minimums were introduced under previous Liberal governments. For example, the mandatory minimum penalty repeal for using firearms in the commission of an offence dates back to the Liberal government of 1976.

### *Government Orders*

While the government claims to be undoing the work of the former Conservative government, it would truly be undoing the work of many former Liberal governments as well. This Liberal government is maintaining many of the mandatory minimums were introduced or strengthened by the former Conservative government.

In Bill C-5, the government is eliminating six mandatory minimums under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act that target drug dealers: trafficking or possession for the purpose of trafficking; importing and exporting, or possession for the purpose of exporting; and production of a substance schedule I or II, like heroin, cocaine, fentanyl, crystal meth. The government is claiming this is solely to help those who struggle with addictions, but instead, the government is removing the mandatory minimums for those criminals who prey on those with addictions.

Imagine what parents go through when their child is addicted to fentanyl. It is so addictive that it is only a matter of time before the person overdoses. With carfentanil, young people take it once; their first hit is their last, and their heart stops before they hit the floor.

The bill allows for greater use of conditional sentence orders, such as house arrest, for a number of offences where the offender faces a term of less than two years' imprisonment. The offences now eligible include trafficking in, or exporting or importing schedule III drugs. That includes mescaline, LSD and others.

What exactly is being done right now by the government to crack down on the drug trade? Why is the government not tackling the massive issue of supply in Canada?

According to Criminal Intelligence Service Canada, which has strategically allocated resources to investigate organized crime groups with a higher threat level, there are over 1,800 OCGs in Canada. Larger OCGs do not generally restrict themselves to one illicit substance and are importing an array of illicit substances.

Around 75% of OCGs analyzed by Criminal Intelligence Service Canada are involved in cocaine trafficking. The legalization of cannabis has done little to disrupt or displace OCGs due to the fact that 97% of them involved with importing cannabis are also involved in multi-commodity trafficking.

It was noted that organized crime in Canada has grown due to an increase in criminal entrepreneurs who have harnessed the anonymity of the Internet to perpetrate crime. In addition, the dark web has given rise to an increasing number of criminals who are operating independently to implicate themselves in the fentanyl market and rapidly growing meth market due to the relative ease of obtaining precursor chemicals used in their production and synthesis.

In addition to OCGs, there have been increasing threats observed from outlaw motorcycle gangs. For instance, the Hells Angels is an outlaw motorcycle gang with global ties to other active OCGs in Canada.

• (1335)

The organization has expanded across the country, and 50% of organized crime can be attributed to its operations. Hells Angels has increased the number of its support clubs from 40 to 120. This expansion has resulted in approximately double the amount of

criminal activity. Hells Angels uses that coordination to ship fentanyl and methamphetamine together, contributing to the trend of polydrug trafficking.

Their operations vary in terms of sophistication but pose a threat to public safety nonetheless. Violence surrounding OCGs is increasing and is commensurate with the increase in firearms-related crime in Canada, the expansion of illicit handguns westward from Ontario and the escalating use of social media to facilitate the illicit drug trade. It was noted that many key players from the largest OCGs have been killed in the past 18 months, both domestically and while brokering drug deals abroad.

With respect to importation of illicit substances in Canada, existing OCGs with networks and smuggling routes for cocaine and heroin from Mexico are shifting focus. There has been a large increase in fentanyl and methamphetamine smuggling from Mexico. Favouring profitability, OCGs are moving away from heroin and toward fentanyl. As meth becomes less expensive to produce, its street value is declining, leading to increased demand for meth, as people who use drugs shift away from more expensive drugs to meth. Notably, Canada has been identified as a global transshipment country for fentanyl. Currently, there is a five-to-one import-export ratio, with 300 different OCGs involved in importation.

The government has this woke view of criminal justice, that if people are kept out of prison, they will reform and all will be okay. I think drug dealers need to be in prison, not on house arrest where they can continue to ruin children's lives and families' lives and devastate communities. Those most vulnerable in our society must be protected. I believe that is not in question.

In my home province, according to preliminary data released by the B.C. coroners service, the toxic illicit drug supply claimed the lives of at least 2,224 British Columbians in 2021. Lisa Lapointe, the chief coroner, stated, "Over the past seven years, our province has experienced a devastating loss of life due to a toxic illicit drug supply. This public health emergency has impacted families and communities across the province and shows no sign of abating." In 2021 alone, more than 2,200 families experienced the devastating loss of a loved one.

In the past seven years, the rate of death due to illicit drug toxicity in our province has risen more than 400%. Drug toxicity is now second only to cancer in B.C. for potential years of life lost. Fentanyl was detected in 83% of samples tested in 2021. Carfentanil was present in 187 results, almost triple the number recorded in 2020. Illicit drug poisoning is now the leading cause of death among B.C. people aged 19 to 39, people in the prime of their lives. For men, the toxic drug crisis has been so severe that overall life expectancy at birth for males has declined in recent years in B.C.

The townships that experienced the highest number of illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2021 were Vancouver, Surrey and Victoria. For me, representing and living in South Surrey—White Rock, these are not just statistics. We live it every day in B.C.

I feel for those families that have lost loved ones to drugs. For that reason, I cannot support this government bill. Members can characterize me as they will, but six lives will be lost in British Columbia to drug overdose today, and I do not think Bill C-5 does a thing to deter drug dealers from killing my constituents. It makes their lives easier while they destroy those around them.

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am having a hard time understanding my colleague's logic. Bill C-5 is not yet in effect, but she is saying that six people will die today. The current approach is rigid prohibition, rigid enforcement, an approach that has never worked.

Does she know that harm reduction specifically means focusing police and judicial resources in order to fight back against traffickers and criminal organizations?

[*English*]

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, I have been accused of many things, but usually it is not that I am illogical. I think my arguments are extremely logical, in fact.

We know that, in this country, we have very poor supervision of our ports. Resources have not been allocated by the government, either in personnel or in investment in money, to properly monitor the drugs that come into this country through the ports and through the mail. This is a global phenomenon, and they are very easily obtained. What we are talking about is looking to those who traffic in the misery and dependency of others. We should be focused on victims, not helping those who want to traffic in drugs.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague quoted Lisa Lapointe, a very respected public health official in British Columbia. She has called for the decriminalization of drugs and for treating drug use and substance use disorders as health issues.

My hon. colleague properly empathizes with the unbelievable, astronomical death rate in British Columbia. The New Democrats have pointed to the problem being the toxic street supply, and the fact that decades and decades of a “tough on crime, war on drugs” approach, which attempts to punish and interdict drugs, has been an absolute, abject, empirical, total failure.

### *Government Orders*

The member claims to be logical, so could she tell me if she thinks the war on drugs has been successful? Does she think that more punishment and trying to interdict drugs would give any different result than we have had over the last 50 years?

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my colleague, who has been in this House a long time, even though we often approach things from a very different point of view.

The fact of the matter is that just because a fight is hard or just because a fight is not immediate in its results does not mean that we give up the fight and say that we do not like the results of where things are right now, so we should just abandon that.

The member mentioned Lisa Lapointe, the chief coroner. She is focusing on addicts and people who need help with drug addiction. That is my focus as well. We need greater and larger expansion of help, with drug treatment centres and with places for families to help their addicted loved ones have a place to go to get off those drugs and be able to embrace a different life. That has nothing to do with going soft on those who traffic in human misery.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by reassuring my colleague. I did not say that she was illogical; I said that I was having a hard time understanding her logic, which is not the same thing.

That said, the Bloc Québécois stands up every day to tell the government that Bill C-5 is not enough and that we need to fight organized crime and create a registry of criminal organizations. Given what the hon. member was saying about borders and the current shortcomings in the fight against organized crime, I presume that she supports our bill and will vote for it.

[*English*]

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, this is where there is an alignment between what I hear from the Bloc and my own personal feelings on this.

The Bloc members talk about gang violence and crimes, particularly in Montreal, in their interventions in the House. We have the same issues in Surrey, B.C., where I am from. We have a rampant gang violence problem in that community. It pours over to innocents, such as a local man who is a coach and a nurse at our local hospital. Through mistaken identity and the car he drove, he was shot down in his driveway, leaving his family bereft and grieving. He had nothing to do with it.

These are very serious issues, and we are in alignment on that.

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the government's Bill C-5 would amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to repeal certain minimum penalties, allow for a greater use of conditional sentences and establish diversion measures for simple drug possession offences. There are two parts to the bill. The first repeals 20 mandatory minimum sentences for offences involving firearms and drugs, and the second introduces the principle of diversion for simple drug possession.

First, I must say that the Liberals' bill is certainly well intentioned. However, the timing of its introduction is rather odd, given that gun violence is spiking and the federal government, which is responsible for managing our borders, is being criticized for doing nothing to stem imports of illegal firearms. Not a day goes by without this issue being mentioned during question period in the House. The number of gun crimes has increased considerably over time. Between 2019 and 2020, the number of gun crimes committed in Montreal rose by 15%, and the number of firearms seized increased by 24%.

In addition, the goal is to repeal certain mandatory minimum sentences for drug production, yet the opioid crisis is claiming more and more lives in Quebec and Canada. If I put myself in the shoes of the families who have lost a loved one to a shooting or to the use of drugs laced with fentanyl by an unscrupulous dealer, I am not sure this is the response they were hoping for from the government at this point.

The bill repeals several minimum penalties for second and third offences. While it is true that mandatory minimum sentences for a first offence may impact social reintegration, keeping certain mandatory minimum sentences for second or even third offences could be justified as a way of upholding the credibility of our legal system. Maintaining public confidence in our justice institutions is also a concern that should not be dismissed out of hand.

Let us remember that, under the Harper government in 2006, a number of mandatory minimum sentences were challenged. Section 12 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protects individuals from cruel and unusual punishment in Canada, is often used as an argument against mandatory minimum sentences. Over 210 constitutional challenges have been filed. According to the Minister of Justice, 69% of the constitutional challenges involving mandatory minimum sentences for drug offences and 48% of those for firearms offences were successful. To be honest, we cannot call that a success.

That said, we are supporting Bill C-5 despite being somewhat dissatisfied with it. My esteemed colleagues from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia and Rivière-du-Nord repeatedly asked the government to split the bill in two, because we believe that tackling substance addiction and abolishing mandatory minimum sentences are two fundamentally different issues. Unfortunately, the government rejected our request, so here we are now.

We are disappointed with the part about mandatory minimum sentences, but we agree on the principle of establishing diversion measures as introduced in Bill C-5. With respect to mandatory min-

imum sentences, the Bloc Québécois wants the legal system to adopt an approach that enables rehabilitation and reduces crime.

● (1350)

Considering that mandatory minimums have few benefits and introduce many problems, such as the overrepresentation of indigenous and Black communities in prison, in addition to increasing system costs and failing to deter crime, the Bloc Québécois supports the idea of repealing certain mandatory minimum sentences.

However, we believe this is a bad time to repeal mandatory minimums for firearms offences, because many Quebec and Canadian cities are seeing a firearms epidemic, due in part to the Liberal government's failure to implement border controls.

Repealing mandatory minimums without strong action by the federal government to counter the illegal importation of firearms at the border sends the wrong message. Although the Bloc Québécois can get behind repealing mandatory minimums for a first offence, we believe that keeping these sentences for second and even third offences can be justified, as this would maintain the public's trust in their justice institutions and the rehabilitation process.

Believing in second chances does not mean that people's actions do not have consequences. It is a question of common sense.

Although we think it is defensible to repeal mandatory minimum sentences for firearms possession, the fact that the bill repeals mandatory minimums for certain offences involving firearms, such as discharging a weapon with intent and robbery or extortion with a firearm, seems to contradict the government's claim that they are being maintained for certain categories of serious crimes.

During the last election campaign and during the debate on Bill C-236, we expressed support for the introduction of the principle of diversion for simple drug possession. However, I would remind the House that such a measure will only be effective if investments are made in health care through transfers to support health care systems and community organizations, which need ways to support people grappling with addiction and mental health problems. They are doing amazing work on the ground, and they need resources to carry out their mission.

We have said it before, but it bears repeating: The Bloc Québécois and the Quebec government demand health care funding. I think we have said this 572 times, but we want health transfers to cover 35% of the system costs. Unfortunately, the government has failed to respond. It is silent in the face of the unanimous demands of Quebec and the provinces. Those demands have been reiterated every year since the Liberals came to power, in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and today in 2022.

Will they have the audacity to keep saying no until 2023? I hope not.

• (1355)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I look at Bill C-5 as a positive piece of legislation. I understand the member's concerns with respect to dividing it, which is what the Bloc wanted to see, but overall I think it is important that we understand and appreciate judicial independence. The idea is that our judges need to have discretionary authority to deal with issues such as systemic racism, which is very real in our court system.

I wonder if my colleague could provide her thoughts with regard to that aspect of the legislation and how it would benefit that issue.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Madam Speaker, I will not answer the question specifically, but I do have something to say.

For weeks now, months even, the Bloc Québécois has been making proposals concerning well-being and suggesting solutions to the current government, which sometimes ends up in reaction mode because it has failed to prepare. This time, we are telling the government that it should split this bill in two because it covers two different things.

I have a question of my own. Why are we once again faced with a mammoth bill at the end of the session while being hit with one time allocation motion after another?

[English]

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is interesting listening to the debate. The government claims that this bill is about systemic racism and in particular about the overrepresentation of Black and indigenous people in our prison population. If we read the bill, the bill makes no mention of racism and no mention of Black or indigenous communities. There is nothing in there about programs or processes to address the inequalities. It is simply a bill about lowering sentences for broad categories of offences.

When there is overrepresentation, reducing overall sentences or removing minimum sentences or sentencing starting points does not change the fundamental cause of overrepresentation. There is nothing in the bill that actually addresses the issue of overrepresentation whatsoever, and the government's rhetorical defence of the bill has nothing to do with what is in the bill.

I wonder if the member has a comment on that.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Madam Speaker, my answer is very simple. We need to start relying on science, legal experts and the right advisers who are giving us concrete proof that there is a right way of doing things.

The right way of doing things is to invest in rehabilitation and support, because reducing minimum penalties will not reduce crime. The statistics make that clear.

### Statements by Members

I hope that we will implement structures and concrete measures to help people, because, right now, there are flaws in Bill C-5.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I share the concerns of my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle about having one bill with two goals. I fully support the elimination of mandatory minimum sentences, which do not work and are a problem for our justice system. At the same time, I am absolutely in favour of measures to achieve the objective of Bill C-5, which is that problematic substance use must be addressed primarily as a social and health issue, not a criminal one.

Both of these elements are in Bill C-5, but as a result, each is weaker in achieving the results we need.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Madam Speaker, I will be very succinct.

I know that we can be proactive because I worked with community organizations in Laurentides—Labelle that work proactively to prevent crime. They have what it takes to help us. I agree that Bill C-5 should be split in two.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

### FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker,

[Member spoke in Filipino]

[English]

June is the month in which we celebrate and recognize the importance of Filipino Canadian heritage. It is also the month in which the country of the Philippines celebrates its independence of 124 years. If we were to canvass the House, I am sure we would find a general consensus that the contributions of the Filipino heritage community are second to no other. It continues to grow. It is one million strong.

It is with great pleasure that I encourage all members, rural and urban and from all sides, to recognize the important role the Filipino heritage community plays every day of the year.

I give a special shout-out to my *ate* Clarita for the beautiful suit jacket.

*Statements by Members***SASKATCHEWAN ROUGHRIDERS**

**Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the Canadian Football League regular season kicks off tonight, and the Saskatchewan Roughriders' home opener is this Saturday at Mosaic Stadium in Regina. This year, the green and white will be victorious in all regions of the country, including Atlantic Canada, when Wolfville, Nova Scotia, hosts a game against the Toronto Argos on July 16.

It has been a tough three years for Rider nation. Not only was the 2020 Grey Cup game in Regina cancelled due to the pandemic, but the 2019 and 2021 Grey Cups were both won by the Winnipeg Blue Bombers. It is shameful.

However, those dark times are behind us, and we are all looking forward to seeing the Riders win the Grey Cup on home turf in Regina this November 20. If anyone is still thinking about their fall vacation plans, the Grey Cup festivities in Regina this November are not to be missed.

Go Riders, and have a great season.

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**EVENT IN OAKVILLE NORTH—BURLINGTON**

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, June 18 will be a big day in Oakville North—Burlington as we celebrate the arts, lacrosse and a renowned sports artist. On this special day, the Toronto Rock Athletic Centre in Oakville will host the Rob MacDougall Memorial Lacrosse Day and Celebrity Classic in honour of Rob MacDougall, while raising funds and awareness for KidSport Ontario.

Rob was an artist, athlete, coach and leader who was known for his paintings of sports legends. He loved lacrosse and designed logos for teams like the Oakville Hawks, the Oakville Buzz, the Burlington Chiefs and the Toronto Rock. Not only that, but he revitalized lacrosse in our community. There are not many players who were not touched by him. Rob's leadership in the arts and in sports has not gone unnoticed.

I enthusiastically encourage everyone to support this event, whether attending, donating or spreading the word, in celebration of Rob MacDougall and Canadian sports.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SYLVAIN GAUDREULT**

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my friend Sylvain Gaudreault has just a few days left at the Quebec National Assembly as the MNA for Jonquière.

A professor and historian who was first elected in 2007, Sylvain has filled almost every role a parliamentarian can hold, including serving as a "super-minister" in the Marois government from 2012 to 2014 and as interim leader of the Parti Québécois. However, by his own admission, the role of MNA was the most important.

The people of Jonquière have trusted him to represent them for over 15 years because they know he is a humble, fair and devoted man. My MNA attributed his staying power in politics to the "Syl-

vain method", which essentially meant always elevating the debate and remaining positive. That is the mark of a great politician and statesman.

Sylvain proudly served the independence movement and helped Quebec move forward. I will always remember his courage and the strength of his convictions as he uncompromisingly defended the goal of a just and active transition to an independent Quebec.

I want to thank Sylvain and wish him all the best for the future.

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**SITUATION IN UKRAINE**

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Russian invasion began over 100 days ago. Since then, the people of Ukraine have been experiencing a massacre.

In December, two months before the invasion, I proposed that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development urgently examine the situation in Ukraine. Our work is not done, and I still think it is very important.

● (1405)

[English]

Our foreign affairs committee heard from the Ukrainian ambassador about the horrific acts of violence, rape, torture and cold-blooded murder of civilians. The Ukrainian ambassador invited our committee to come to Ukraine to bear witness to this, which I very much hope to do, but the Conservative Party refused. What is more, it has been nearly four weeks that the Conservatives have been filibustering the work of our committee, preventing us from hearing from witnesses and getting on with our work.

Now, just this week, the Conservative Party officially proposed to the House to drop sanctions against Russia on certain agricultural goods. It is shameful.

In times of crisis and in times of war, we must rise. We cannot obfuscate. We cannot back down. We must rise to meet the moment.

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**FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH**

**Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Filipino Heritage Month. Filipino Canadians have made tremendous contributions to the social, cultural and economic well-being of Canada.

In my province of Manitoba, the first immigrants from the Philippines arrived in the 1950s. Today, Manitoba is proudly home to one of the most vibrant populations of Filipino Canadians in the country. Canada and the Philippines have an important and ever-growing relationship on the world stage.

As the vice-chair of the Canada-Philippines Interparliamentary Friendship Group, I sincerely look forward to working with all Canadians and Filipinos to advance our nations' shared interests.

This morning, I was honoured to join members of the Filipino community at a flag-raising ceremony on Parliament Hill where we celebrated the Philippines' 124th Independence Day. I ask all Canadians from coast to coast to join me in celebrating Filipino Heritage Month.

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#### FILIPINO HERITAGE DAY

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it would appear that this is not only Filipino Heritage Month, it is Filipino Heritage Day here in the House of Commons, and I join my colleagues in celebrating a community that has happily woven its way very deeply into our multicultural fabric.

Celebrate is the right term. This morning we enjoyed raising the flag of the Philippines on Parliament Hill and we enjoyed our very own, very talented Glisha from Surrey as she sang the national anthems. We have enjoyed mixing and mingling with diplomatic representatives and Filipino community leaders.

In that regard, we on the west coast and in Surrey are particularly honoured to be the home of Narima Dela Cruz, president of the Filipino National Congress. From the first Filipino sailors who came to our west coast in the late 1800s and those who worked in our lumber mills and mines in the early 1900s, to the workers who settled on the Prairies and founded Winnipeg's strong and robust Filipino community, we know them as friendly, hard-working, forward-looking people who are a valued part of every neighbourhood they are to be found in. In other words, they are really good Canadians.

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#### OFFICE STAFF THANKS

**Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and all Canadians to four very important people: Ashley Lloyd, Maghnus Ryan, David Hickey and Jeannette Arsenault. They may not be as popular and as well known as Wayne Long in the riding of Saint John—Rothesay, but they are equally, if not more, important.

They are part of Team Long. They are part of my constituency office and my Hill office, and we all know as MPs that we would not be here without them. They answer the phones, they answer the emails and the social media, they schedule the meetings, and they learn our programs and policies. They are on the front lines and on behalf of all of us, and all Canadians, I want to thank them for the wonderful jobs they do in our constituency and Hill offices.

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#### JOHN SMYLIE

**Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I speak today on the passing last week of John Smylie of Quinte West, honorary colonel of CFB Trenton. John was a community leader, a loving husband, an incredible father and a more incredible grandfather.

#### Statements by Members

John and Angela Smylie operated grocery stores in Simcoe, Guelph and Brockville, and ended up as operators of Smylie's Independent in Trenton, Ontario. John showed his true love and philanthropy to his town and region. In the 2003 blackout, when other grocers were increasing their prices of batteries, John decreased his. When people needed baskets for the Salvation Army, he was the first in line.

He championed the local Trenton Memorial Hospital and ensured that it would thrive today. He was the honorary colonel of 436 Squadron in Quinte West and when he passed, he was the honorary colonel of CFB Trenton, cherishing every moment spent there. He wore his uniform with pride.

The Bay of Quinte mourns the loss of an incredible service person to our community. He was a true friend and family man. I thank John for his service to our region and to our country.

May he rest in peace.

\* \* \*

• (1410)

#### FIREARMS LEGISLATION

**Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest risk factors in a violent intimate relationship is gun ownership. Just by virtue of having a gun in the home, the lethality of intimate partner violence increases by 500%.

A femicide occurs every two and a half days in our country. It routinely follows documented incidents of intimate partner violence, and it disproportionately affects indigenous women and women living in rural areas.

Intimate partner violence and gun violence intersect, and they intersect in deadly ways. That is why Bill C-21's new red flag law is crucial: It would ensure that anyone who is proved to be at risk of harming themselves or those around them would not be able to possess a firearm licence.

There are still too many women in this country who live in fear. These new provisions would save lives, and I hope everyone in the House will support the bill's speedy passage.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN PORTNEUF—JACQUES-CARTIER**

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, located in the beautiful greater Quebec City region, is known for its many tourist attractions, its hospitality and its abundance of local products.

Not to be missed are the farmers' markets, which are becoming a gathering place for passionate farmers, creative artisans and dedicated producers who are always ready to take good care of their customers. The wide variety of products and the friendly people always make for a pleasant experience.

At the farmers' markets in Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures, Deschambault-Grondines, Pont-Rouge, Saint-Raymond, Saint-Casimir, Stoneham-et-Tewkesbury, Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier and Sainte-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier, visitors are sure to discover something special that will make their visit more enjoyable.

I invite all of Canada's foodies to come for a visit. They will receive a warm welcome in Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

I wish everyone a good summer.

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[English]

**JOHN WARE MEMORIAL**

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, thunderclouds rolled over the foothills of southern Alberta, bringing desperately needed rain for the grasslands of the foothills. It was a perfect backdrop for a celebration honouring a legendary cowboy.

The stories of John Ware are almost too fantastic to believe. He would stop a steer head-on. He would lift small cows and he would break horses that others thought were unbreakable. What is indisputable is a story of survival and perseverance. John Ware embodied the strength and resilience of Black Canadians. He overcame racism, rough frontier conditions and slavery to build a life for himself and his family in the foothills, and he became a successful and renowned rancher. A highly skilled horseman, John joined a crew that drove a thousand head of cattle to the Rocky Mountains, where he built a life for himself.

His achievements are now being honoured with a plaque at the Bar U Ranch National Historic Site in the saddle barn that he helped build. I would encourage all Canadians to learn more about this incredible pioneer so that the legend of John Ware lives on.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**WEST ISLAND BLACK COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION**

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to talk about an organization that is doing fantastic work on behalf of the Black community in Pierrefonds—Dollard.

[English]

The West Island Black Community Association, properly known as WIBCA, is celebrating its 40th anniversary this month. This wonderful organization provides a wide array of services to all segments of society while also empowering Montreal's Black community. Its services include a clinic, a scholarship program, its first-ever robotics expo being inaugurated this week and fitness programs, as well as security and financial literacy workshops for seniors.

[Translation]

I want to thank the West Island Black Community Association for playing such a vital role in the pandemic response and for its hard work in our community.

[English]

I thank them for making the West Island a better place. I look forward to celebrating this important milestone with them.

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**OJIBWAY NATIONAL URBAN PARK**

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in the face of continued misinformation from the Prime Minister's Office, yesterday's passage of Bill C-248 establishing Ojibway National Park was a victory for Caldwell First Nation, the City of Windsor, Essex County and the environment. New Democrats, Conservatives, the Bloc Québécois, the Green Party and two courageous Liberal MPs voted to establish this historic park.

I want to thank Chief Mary Duckworth and all of Caldwell First Nation for years of advocacy, Mayor Dilkens and all of the city council, Janet and Dave of Wildlands League, the Unifor Environment Committee, Friends of the Rouge, Friends of Ojibway Park, Essex County Field Naturalists' Club, ERCA, thousands of resident schools and businesses, Wildlife Preservation Canada, Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, Green Ummah, the Audubon Society and Save Ojibway.

These remarkable organizations and people came together and worked hand in hand to make this park a reality. We now invite members who did not vote for this park to work with us on the next steps.

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● (1415)

[Translation]

**QUEBEC'S POLITICAL WEIGHT**

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal and Conservative members from Quebec showed their true colours yesterday. They voted against protecting Quebec's political weight in the House of Commons. They voted against maintaining the proportion of seats in Ottawa for the Quebec nation at 25%.

Because of them, Quebec is doomed to slowly disappear. Maintaining Quebec's political weight at 25% is not a new concept. It was proposed as part of the Charlottetown accord in 1992. It was Brian Mulroney's compromise in order to accommodate Quebec within the Canadian system. It was known as the "beau risque". That is what the Liberals and Conservatives said no to.

It is even worse coming from the Conservatives, because they are abandoning the only real legacy they ever had in Quebec. In 1992, the Conservatives were in favour of protecting Quebec's political weight, while the Reform Party opposed it. This is basically proof that that party over there today is the Reform Party. It also shows how important the Quebec nation is to the rest of Canada. Let us face the facts.

\* \* \*

[English]

### HUMAN RIGHTS WORK

**Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Chinese Communist Party continues to commit horrific acts of violence against Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims: acts that this House has rightly recognized constitute genocide. Actions by Parliament and the government continue to be vitally needed to more effectively block products made with Uighur forced labour, halt complicity in organ harvesting and prevent Canadian imports from supporting this repression, and to sanction perpetrators of violence.

This week, I was very pleased to join Senator Leo Housakos in welcoming a leader in the fight for Uighurs and for human rights in general to Parliament: NBA star Enes Kanter Freedom. Honestly, I am not normally a big sports fan, but it was great to see the way that the convening power of celebrity could be used to constructively engage more people in an important cause. Mr. Freedom has leveraged his audience of millions to bring awareness and promote action in support of the world's most vulnerable. Uighurs in concentration camps often cannot have their voices heard, so Mr. Freedom is using his platform to magnify their voices.

I also want to recognize his important work on human rights in Turkey to defend the rights of those persecuted by the increasingly authoritarian Erdogan regime.

While many stars and corporate brands only stand for racial justice when it is convenient, Mr. Freedom is always a champion on the court that matters most. I thank him for being a voice for the voiceless.

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### ITALIAN WEEK OTTAWA

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to rise today to welcome back, after two long years of waiting, the in-person Italian Week Ottawa celebrations in my community of Ottawa Centre. Italian Week is focused on creating exciting experiences that share Italian culture with all of us.

The events scheduled this year include a film screening, master classes, children's bedtime stories and much more. The grand finale

### Oral Questions

will take place from June 17 to 19 along beautiful Preston Street in Little Italy in my community.

I encourage everyone to join us next weekend to see live entertainment, a soccer tournament, kids' rides, opera performances, street animations and the Ottawa bike race as we close out the week.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Department of Canadian Heritage for the ongoing support it has provided to Italian Week Ottawa, and to applaud the festival organizers and board directors, Lydia Di Francesco and Gina Maddalena, along with all the volunteers for their tireless efforts in planning this fantastic celebration.

Happy *Settimana Italiana di Ottawa*.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### HEALTH

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, soon masks will no longer be required on public transit in Ontario. Soon masks will no longer be required on public transit in Quebec. The provincial governments listened to the recommendations of their public health experts.

Vaccine passports are no longer required in the country unless you are taking a plane, working for the federal government or entering the Parliament buildings. It is so ridiculous that some Liberal MPs have asked the Conservatives not to talk about it because they are afraid it will upset the Prime Minister and he will dig in his heels.

What is wrong with the Prime Minister's political science?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first allow me to thank Canadians for the sacrifices they made to get through the pandemic. Our collective efforts have borne fruit: Canada has the second-lowest mortality rate in the G7 and the lowest unemployment rate in the last 50 years.

Such effective outcomes are a result of the vaccines and all the public health measures we implemented.

● (1420)

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, her talent for not answering questions is incredible. What is the difference between being crammed into a subway or lining up at an airport? People on the subway have physical contact with others, vaccinated or not, and public health is fine with that. At an airport, everyone is vaccinated and must still wear a mask.

### Oral Questions

The Prime Minister has no science to justify this. Does the Prime Minister think that the provincial public health agencies, which are responsible for health, are wrong? Are all the agencies in all the provinces wrong, or is he the only one who is right? Why does the Prime Minister insist on making people wear masks and maintaining these measures?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the incredible talent is the Conservative's talent of not understanding that these public health measures and vaccines are the reason Canada has succeeded in the fight against COVID-19.

If the United States had matched Canada's vaccination rate, they could have avoided 690,000 hospitalizations and 163,000 deaths.

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### JUSTICE

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all we ever hear from the minister is “if”. She never gives real answers. Let us talk about real-life things.

Even as shootings are on the rise in Montreal, the Liberals are in such a hurry to release criminals that they are going to gag the opposition to pass Bill C-5, which imposes mandatory minimum sentences.

Here is what one Montrealer said on TVA: “My mother and I were sitting on the porch after supper, and we had to go inside and hide because there was shooting. There was gunshot after gunshot.”

This is not a war zone we are talking about; it is Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Why are the Liberals more interested in helping criminals than in offering reassurance to this woman and all Montrealers?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what we are interested in is taking concrete action to reduce the number of guns, such as handguns, in Canada.

I find the Conservative members' questions absurd. They are against the important historic measures we are proposing.

[English]

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Conservatives believe that meaningful and effective steps must be taken to end gun violence and gun crime in Canada. Canadians need to be safe, and victims of domestic violence need to be protected. While there are aspects of Bill C-21 that we can agree on, specifically on domestic violence issues, the rest of the bill falls short and would do nothing to end gun violence.

Will the Liberals agree to split Bill C-21 into two bills? One would be to protect the victims of domestic violence, while the other aspects of the bill would be reworked to offer real and effective solutions to gun crime and gun trafficking.

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, speaking as a member of Parliament for downtown Toronto and as a mother of teenagers who live in my riding, I want to say very clearly that we will never water down our measures on gun control. We know that these are es-

sential to protecting Canadians, and I just wish the members opposite would stop their posturing and join us in savings lives.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, divisive policies do not protect people. Fear does not protect people. Virtue-signalling does not protect people. The Liberals are using U.S.-style wedge politics for their own political gain. It will not keep Canadians safe, and it will not stop violence.

Conservatives will be putting forward a sincere offer to split Bill C-21 so that victims of domestic violence can be protected as soon as possible. We can work together to get this done, but it is up to the Liberals. They have two options: They can either accept the offer to protect victims immediately, or they can reject it and continue with their divisive rhetoric, which would leave victims vulnerable.

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, do members know what protects Canadians? What protects Canadians is banning military-style assault weapons, which have no place in our society. What protects Canadians is limiting access to handguns, and I will tell members what is entirely insincere. It is the Conservatives' fake concern for Canadians who are victims of gun violence. Conservatives could support those Canadians by supporting our legislation.

\* \* \*

● (1425)

[Translation]

### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec gave all members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages a book of amendments for Bill C-13, in which it sets out how to actually protect the French Language. Quebec reiterates that the bill must mention the particular situation of French as a minority language within an English-speaking continent. It also reiterates that the Charter of the French Language must apply to federally regulated businesses. Quebec has a unique expertise when it comes to the French language, earned over its 400-year history.

Will the federal government meet Quebec's demands?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said last week, our government recognizes that the French language needs to be strengthened in Quebec and across Canada. Our government knows that the French fact is declining in Quebec and across Canada and that we need to halt that decline.

With respect to expertise, it is clear that I am an anglophone and “ukrainophone”, but we have francophone members from Quebec and from all over the country in our party.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have seen a lot of bills, and it is extraordinary for Quebec to officially submit amendments to a federal bill. It is extraordinary because it is existential. Bill C-13 is about our official, common and national language. Quebec is saying that, without amendments, Bill C-13 does not protect French in Quebec. Rather, it promotes bilingualism, which leads to anglicization.

Does the federal government realize that there is one area, only one area, where Canada must meet Quebec's demands, and that is the protection of the French language?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I completely agree that French in Quebec and Canada is an existential issue. I absolutely agree. As a Ukrainian Canadian, I understand full well, on a very personal level, the importance of language and culture. However, I must also say that Bill C-13 is an excellent bill that will protect French in Quebec and across the country.

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### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the rising cost of living, the Liberals keep making comparisons rather than presenting solutions to help people. They say that things are better here than they are elsewhere. Basically, they are telling us to suck it up and stop whining.

Here is the reality, however. Workers are having to turn to food banks. Under the Liberals, the cost of housing rose faster in Canada than in any other G7 country. Meanwhile, investors are getting richer while families are struggling. People want solutions, not excuses.

When will the Liberals do something to make life more affordable for families?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we agree that affordability is very important for Canadian families. That is why we have implemented practical, targeted solutions that have already put money back in Canadians' pockets.

For example, we increased the Canada workers benefit so that a family of three will receive \$2,300 more this year. We are also making a one-time payment of \$500 to people facing housing challenges. We are doing a lot more, but I see that I am out of time.

\* \* \*

[English]

### HOUSING

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while families struggle to afford groceries, rent and gas for their cars, the Liberals shrug and say that things are better here than elsewhere. Since they like comparisons so much, I have one for them. Under the Liberals, the cost of a home in Canada has increased faster than it has in any other country in the G7. Canadians cannot find a home they can afford, and they want solutions, not excuses. The government must act now.

### Oral Questions

Will the Liberals stop with the excuses and build 500,000 units of social housing and co-op housing to help families struggling to make ends meet?

• (1430)

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to co-op housing, and I did grow up in a co-op, our government, in the recent budget, put forward the biggest investment in co-op housing in a generation. That is something I am very proud of. I want to thank the MP for Milton for his hard work on that.

When it comes to other solutions to help Canadians with affordability, let me point to a very important program, the Canada workers benefit, which we have increased by \$9 billion over five years. A family of three, this year, is getting \$2,300 more.

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### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is disturbing that Conservatives needed to ask the police to find out that the minister's statement claiming that police recommended the government invoke the Emergencies Act was in fact false.

No such recommendations were made by police. The deputy minister tried to explain the minister's claims, saying he was misunderstood. Why did the minister repeatedly fail to give Parliament accurate information? Was he just hoping he would not get caught?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me quote from the testimony of Commissioner Brenda Lucki of the RCMP, from the committee my hon. colleague is a member of. Referring to the government, she said:

When they did come up with measures, they came to us to ask if these measures would be useful.

Then, when they were revoking it, of course, they came again to us and asked, "Are you in a position that you no longer need the additional authorities?" It was a consultation.

That is precisely what we have said all along. It was the responsible thing to do to invoke the Emergencies Act. If we want to be a government, we have to know how to protect Canadians, and that is what we did.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's story keeps changing.

Invoking the Emergencies Act set a precedent in our country's history. There is no room for the government to mislead, equivocate or to be misunderstood. Parliament was led to believe by the Minister of Public Safety that police asked the government to invoke the Emergencies Act, but now we know that is false.

Will the minister show some humility and apologize to Canadians for his inaccurate statements?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would think my colleague, the hon. member of this chamber, would have the humility to recognize the words I just said were not from the government but from the RCMP Commissioner in front of the committee, which he was privy to.

He heard those words that the commissioner said, that the government consulted, which is exactly what we have said all along. We sought the advice of law enforcement on the powers that they needed to restore public safety. What we did in invoking the Emergencies Act was the responsible thing to do to protect Canadians' safety.

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**HEALTH**

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last night at the health committee, the president of PHAC confirmed that the Prime Minister's continued mandates are driven by political science. He said that there were no metrics to justify these mandates and no metrics that can be met to lift them.

While infectious disease experts and now PHAC are both pointing to politics as the reason for the federal mandates, officials are dropping the last of the provincial mandates. When will the Prime Minister and the government drop the politics and end the mandates?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was at that meeting. I thank my hon. colleague for the collaboration on the health committee.

All Canadians are sick and tired of COVID-19. We all agree that we want it to go away, but just wishing it away is not going to make it happen. Over the past few months we have made some amendments, we have made some changes, and we continue to see some deaths from COVID-19. In fact over 1,700 deaths from COVID-19 in May alone.

The most important thing that we can do to get through this pandemic is to consider getting vaccinated. We will continue to be informed by science, not the political games of the Conservative opposition.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary talks about political games. He is talking about vaccines. The Liberal government has already thrown five million doses in the garbage. We have heard from infectious disease specialists that their mandates are saving zero lives. They are ineffective. They are political in their entirety.

Dr. Tam said last night that the government would not do away with mandates because they would be too hard to force upon Canadians later. Does that sound like medical science to anyone?

The Prime Minister would not give up his control over Canadians because they would not let him take it from them again. Enough is enough. When will the Prime Minister end the mandates?

• (1435)

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives cannot seem to make up their minds about vaccinations.

The member for Yorkton—Melville claims that the government has a secret agenda after refusing to get vaccinated.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, this type of rhetoric is divisive and all members of the House should stop trying to spread—

**The Speaker:** I am just going to interrupt. We started off really well, but it seems to have gone downhill. I just want to make sure that everybody can hear the answer that is being given. The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes asked a question and I am sure he wants to hear the answer.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives cannot seem to make up their minds about vaccinations. A year ago, they were saying we would never have enough vaccinations to get every Canadian vaccinated, yet lo and behold, we have got many vaccinations in the arms of Canadians.

The member for Yorkton—Melville claims the government has some kind of secret agenda after refusing to get vaccinated herself. Her colleague, the Conservative MP for Niagara West, has talked about banning mRNA vaccines in Canada. That is the same vaccine that has saved millions and millions of lives.

The science is clear. Vaccines are safe and effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19, as well as reducing severe cases, hospitalizations and death.

When will the Conservatives get on board and encourage their constituents to get vaccinated?

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, an RV dealer in Kelowna—Lake Country, a boat dealer in B.C., as well as their respective national industry organizations, all tell me that the normal delivery times for an RV, boat or their parts from the U.S. have gone from two weeks to up to four months and they will lose their summer sales season. They all said it is because of the federal border vaccine mandates affecting drivers that continue to hurt their small businesses.

When will the Liberals wake up from their 2020 policies and remove these out-of-date, unscientific, unjustified vaccine mandates that are killing small business?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all Canadians are sick and tired of COVID-19. We all want to get back to normal, but just wishing away or ignoring COVID-19 is simply not going to work.

Over the past few months, we continue to see more deaths from COVID-19. In fact, there have been 10,000 deaths in 2022 alone. The most important thing that we can do to get through this pandemic is to continue to ask Canadians to go and get a third dose and remain vigilant.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the EU and U.S. have dropped their mandates, while Canadian travellers still have to provide proof of vaccination, wear masks and be subject to random testing. Canadians want to travel again, but the backlogs created by these now unnecessary restrictions have become so extensive that Air Canada had to cancel 360 flights in one week at Toronto's Pearson airport.

When will the government finally focus on economic recovery and lift these out-of-date, punitive travel mandates?

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me first start by thanking our health care workers who have sacrificed so much over the last couple of years. They have spent two years on the front lines to protect us all and one of the best ways that we can support them and ensure that they stay safe is continue to encourage our constituents to get vaccinated.

Vaccines remain an important tool in stopping the spread of COVID-19 and variants, and as the federal government, we will keep doing everything that we can to support Canadians and keep them safe, which includes encouraging them to get vaccinated.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec has had a carbon market with California since 2014.

The Minister of the Environment actually went to California yesterday, but not to announce that he would be forcing polluting sectors to join the carbon market. No, he announced that the federal government will be creating its own pseudomarket, a system with no emissions cap that allows companies to exchange the right to pollute without actually reducing greenhouse gases.

In a GHG cap and trade system, the “cap” part is not optional. Why is the minister creating a licence to pollute?

[English]

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, establishing a federal carbon offset market is a win-win for the economy and the environment. Starting with landfills, we are putting in place a market-based mechanism to incentivize businesses and municipalities to invest in technologies and innovations that cut pollution. Over the coming year, we will roll out more offset protocols for activities in other sectors, such as forestry and agriculture. This is good for the economy and good for the environment.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is actually a win-win for oil companies.

#### Oral Questions

This new scheme is not actually a carbon market. What it will do is let oil companies continue to pollute like there is no tomorrow while buying offset credits that will give the false impression they are reducing emissions. It is cosmetic, and Greenpeace agrees: “Offsetting doesn’t stop carbon from entering the atmosphere and warming our world, it just keeps it off the books of big polluters responsible.”

Why is the minister creating a greenwashing system instead of promoting the carbon market?

• (1440)

[English]

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that we are working on many fronts to reduce fossil fuel emissions. We are capping emissions from the oil and gas sector. We are implementing a robust clean fuel standard. Yes, we are creating a carbon offset market, as well as phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies by 2023, two years ahead of schedule.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, let us recap the Minister of Environment's actions this year.

First of all, he approved an additional \$2.6 billion in oil subsidies. That is his key budget measure on climate. Then, he approved the Bay du Nord oil project and its billion barrels of oil. Now he is creating a system that will enable oil companies to keep polluting, but to buy credits that will hide their real greenhouse gas emission numbers. What is more, he is a self-proclaimed environmental activist. Sure. Okay then. Soon he will be making us drink oil.

Does the Minister of Environment take us for fools?

[English]

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should remind the hon. member of the emissions reduction plan the minister introduced just a few weeks ago, a very practical road map to fight climate change as we build a clean economy. Here are some of the really important and exciting measures: incentives and infrastructure for electric vehicles, energy retrofits for greener homes and buildings, capping oil and gas emissions and, of course, supporting our farmers for more sustainable agriculture.

We are acting. We are acting very, very prominently.

*Oral Questions***THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the cost of living in northern Saskatchewan has never been so high. Gas is over two dollars a litre and the ever-rising carbon tax has led to unprecedented freight costs. In Black Lake, Hatchet Lake and Fond du Lac, four litres of milk can cost nearly \$14, a dozen eggs, \$9, a kilogram of apples, \$12.

Everyone in Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River is suffering from these record price increases. The Liberals and the NDP continue to vote against Conservative measures that would provide relief. Why?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we understand that affordability matters to Canadians and we absolutely understand that Canadians living in rural and northern communities face particular challenges. That is why our government has taken action and is providing support that is arriving to Canadians right now.

Let me talk about the Canada workers benefit. We have increased it by \$9 billion over five years. The first increased support arrived this April. It is providing a family of three up to \$2,300. There are minimum wage workers in northern Saskatchewan.

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**REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 1,300 workers in Nunavut may soon be out of a job because the government refuses to act.

Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation recently requested an emergency order to allow it to continue to ship six million tonnes of iron ore for 2022. The Minister of Northern Affairs denied the request.

Why is the government forcing these workers out of a job?

**Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government supports a strong resource development sector that is sustainable, creates jobs for northerners and indigenous peoples and respects the environment.

Last week, I spoke to the leadership of Baffinland mines as well as the Qikiqtani Inuit Association about this issue. I am happy and encouraged that they were both at the table to address outstanding issues and work toward an outcome that benefits both parties. Working together with all parties is the only way this issue will get resolved.

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's skilled labour shortage has reached over one million jobs vacant. The shortage of labour is costing our economy \$30 billion and is driving inflation. The government is focused on growing government, adding 61,000 federal positions since 2015, but Canadian businesses cannot find home builders, factory workers and truckers. This is costing Canadians more in food, housing and

goods as lack of employees further chokes the economy and spikes inflation.

When will the government put as much energy into filling Canadian vacant jobs as it does into growing its own bloated government?

• (1445)

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to place the response to this question in the appropriate economic context and I would like to remind the hon. member that, to date, Canada has seen 115% of the jobs lost during the pandemic returned. Our GDP is ahead of prepandemic levels. We are at the lowest rate of unemployment in the recorded history of Canada.

At the same time, we are going to launch a number of measures to continue to recruit new workers, including through immigration. I am pleased to share with the House that, as of today, Canada will welcome its 200,000th permanent resident this year, more than a month and a half faster than any year in the history of Canada.

We are going to continue to use every tool at our disposal to fill the gaps in the labour force and grow our economy.

\* \* \*

**FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as the cost of living skyrockets, the Liberal government is abandoning families who are increasingly relying on food banks to feed their kids. Worse, while families are struggling, the PBO found that the Liberals cut the Canada child benefit. Families' budgets are already stretched and the Liberals are making it even harder for them by cutting the amount they currently receive. This is shameful.

Why are the Liberals shortchanging families when they are already struggling to feed their kids?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to giving families more money to help with the high cost of raising their kids and to making a real difference in the lives of our children. That is why, in 2016, the government introduced the Canada child benefit to provide increased support for low- to middle-income families with children.

The Canada child benefit is tax-free and based on income, so it provides more support to families who need it the most. The Canada child benefit provides support to over 3.5 million families, including over six million children, putting more than \$25 billion tax-free into the pockets of Canadian families.

\* \* \*

### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians want bold action that matches the scale and urgency of the climate crisis, but the Liberals are going about business as usual, failing to secure a livable future. This is the existential threat of our time, and we need a response not seen since the Second World War.

The U.S. just announced they will use their Defense Production Act to build solar panels and heat pumps. Canada has a Defence Production Act that could be used to fight the climate crisis and create good, long-term jobs.

We are in a climate emergency. When will the government start acting like it?

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her advocacy and her good work at the environment committee.

I will just remind her that we have a very robust emissions reduction plan that is an ambitious sector-by-sector pathway for Canada to reach our 2030 emission reductions on our way to 2050 net zero. This has broad support from environmental groups to industry and to farmers.

Canadians want us to deliver clean air, a healthy environment and a strong economy. That is exactly what we are going to do.

[Translation]

**Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, climate change is the greatest long-term threat we face as a global community.

As the country's largest asset owner and public purchaser, can the President of the Treasury Board explain how the Government of Canada is doing its part to green its own operations?

**Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank the hon. member for Vaudreuil—Soulanges for his hard work and for his important question.

The federal government is leading by example in the fight to reduce greenhouse gases. It is doing so by adopting low-carbon solutions for our buildings and vehicles, using sustainable products, reducing the use of single-use plastics, and purchasing greener power.

Together we will take strong, concrete, meaningful and measurable action. Together we will reduce emissions from federal operations by 90% by 2050.

### Oral Questions

[English]

### SPORT

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after four years, Canadians are learning about a settlement between a young woman and Hockey Canada. The victim states that she was repeatedly assaulted in a hotel room in London, Ontario, in 2018. We are hearing that Hockey Canada settled out of court in response to the accusations against eight CHL players.

We had a chance to discuss this yesterday at the heritage committee, but the government members refused. Why is the government minimizing this type of violence?

• (1450)

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, like all Canadians, I am disgusted and horrified by this situation. I want to make sure that no public funds were spent to cover up such actions. That is why I have ordered a financial audit to get to the bottom of this.

Hockey Canada must explain why, despite these egregious actions, these players were in no way held accountable for their actions. Why did they face no consequences and continue on to a professional career?

The culture of silence in sport and in society has been in place for too long. It must stop and it will stop.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we know that Hockey Canada is a recipient of federal funding and although we support athletes and coaches and recognize the importance of these investments, there must be accountability.

Hockey Canada paid money for these perpetrators' bad behaviour. Who is being held accountable?

If the Liberals really cared about women and children, they would have made this a priority at committee. The Liberals claim to be feminists, so why did they not prioritize this at committee?

[Translation]

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, like all Canadians, I am disgusted by this situation, and I want to make sure that no public funds were spent to cover up such actions.

*Oral Questions*

That is why I have ordered a financial audit to get to the bottom of this. Hockey Canada must explain why, despite the allegations of such egregious actions, these players faced no consequences and were allowed to continue on to a professional career.

The culture of silence must stop, and it will stop, but using this situation as an excuse to block Bill C-11 at committee is unacceptable.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there was another shooting in the east end of Montreal last night. A woman from Rivière-des-Prairies who was sitting on her balcony went inside to hide out of fear of being shot.

The Prime Minister's proposed Bill C-5 would get rid of mandatory minimum sentences like the one for discharging a firearm with intent.

The Prime Minister is telling us that Bill C-5 has nothing to do with serious crimes. Is discharging a firearm with intent not a serious crime?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the level of violence caused by firearms is entirely unacceptable.

That is precisely why we introduced Bill C-21. The Conservatives need to stop with their delay tactics and obstruction. We need to start the debate to better protect Quebecers and all Canadians.

There are many good things, common sense measures, in this bill. We need to pass this bill to better protect all Canadians.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is talking about Bill C-21, but I am asking him about Bill C-5.

Gang crime in the streets of Montreal is currently on the rise. Gang members are walking around with their guns and showing them off to everyone. They are not afraid, because the message the Liberal government is sending is that there is no problem and that people can commit gun crimes and will not receive a minimum sentence.

Why is the government going forward with Bill C-5 when it will increase crime on the streets of Montreal?

[English]

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we need a justice system that makes sure serious crimes come with serious penalties, and that is exactly what we are doing. We are increasing the maximum penalties for certain gun offences from 10 to 14 years. That means we are allowing judges to impose longer sentences on serious criminals who endanger our communities.

Based on what we are hearing from Conservatives, they will vote against Bill C-21 and against longer sentences for those criminals. We are taking a responsible approach to keeping our communities safe. The same cannot be said of the Conservative Party.

[Translation]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec did not wait for Ottawa and just offered the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service \$6.2 million to patrol the St. Lawrence river for arms traffickers 24 hours a day.

It is a good thing that Quebec did not wait because Quebec's public safety minister informed us today that she still has not received a single cent of the money promised by Ottawa months ago.

She said that she is still waiting to sign the agreement with the federal government for the money it put on the table to have Quebec police forces address armed violence. She repeated her appeal to the minister. Where is the money?

• (1455)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has already invested \$350 million in the fight against violence caused by organized crime. We have already transferred approximately \$50 million for assistance and support.

We will continue to use our good communication channels to work with my counterparts, including Minister Guilbault. At the same time, we must begin debating Bill C-21 to better protect Quebecers. I hope that the Bloc Québécois will help us do that.

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday there were another three shootings in less than six hours in Montreal, and the Government of Quebec has said that it has not yet received the money it was promised to combat gun violence.

Quebec is putting in the work. For example, it has announced a special patrol to combat gun trafficking in Akwesasne. Ottawa, however, has not even sent Quebec the money it was promised. How shameful.

When will the government finally transfer the money it promised Quebec? Montreal has a gun problem right now, not "one day", "maybe", "if we have the time", "if it is not too hot" or "if it is not raining". The problem is now. I also want to inform the minister that this has nothing to do with Bill C-21.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I assure my colleague and all members of the House that we are in communication with my counterpart, Minister Guilbault, about implementing these programs to prevent gun violence.

I hope that the Bloc Québécois and all members of the House will allow us to start debate on Bill C-21, which contains several concrete measures that will help the member's community.

[English]

### IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a constituent of mine, Jaralaine, applied for permanent residence and a work permit under the caregiver category in April 2020, over two years ago, but IRCC stopped all caregiver applications, as they were not urgent. Now six months pregnant and diagnosed with a serious medical condition that may impact her health and that of her child, she has no health care coverage because of the government's gross mismanagement of immigration.

Will the minister help Jaralaine and others who have come to Canada for a better life?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his sincere concern for his constituents.

With respect to caregiver programs, last year more than 4,000 permanent residents were welcomed to Canada through caregiver streams. We anticipate that this year the number will be 6,000. As I shared earlier in response to a separate question this afternoon, we are actually processing people for permanent residency faster than at any point in the history of Canada, with today being the day that 200,000 new permanent residents will have been welcomed to Canada.

I look forward to taking further questions in private after question period if the hon. member wishes to discuss specific case files.

\* \* \*

### AIRLINE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is not just passports and airports; the government is dropping the ball everywhere.

Canadian pilots have been waiting over a year for Transport Canada to approve their category 1 medical exams. Without these medicals, aspiring pilots cannot continue their training, existing pilots cannot get relicensed and pilots on leave cannot return to work. Delays and inaction under the Liberals are grounding pilots and hurting our economy, despite the growing need for more commercial pilots.

When will these backlogs be cleared so that pilots can get back in the air and back to work?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I share my hon. colleague's frustration. I know there are many pilots waiting for their medical examinations, and Transport Canada has been putting in place new measures to expedite these applications. Our government is responding to the surge in demand for these certificates. We have taken corrective actions to ensure that we expedite these applications.

If the hon. member has a particular case that he would like to bring to my attention, I would be happy to work with him on it.

### Oral Questions

### PASSPORTS

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Passport Canada's website was recently updated, doubling the normal processing times for passports to over two months, plus time for mail.

My question for the minister is very simple: Is nine weeks-plus an acceptable timeline for this most basic of government services?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have explained to this House before, we are experiencing unprecedented volumes when it comes to passports. It is important for us to share this information with Canadians so that they can plan accordingly. We know that this is frustrating and that this is stressful for them, but ensuring that we provide transparent information is important.

When it comes to international comparisons, when we look at countries like the U.S., the U.K. or Australia, we see that they are, on average, processing passports in between nine and 11 weeks. In Sweden there is a wait time of almost 27 weeks. This is something that is happening around the world, but we are putting additional resources in place to deal with it here in Canada.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know that around the world, including here in Canada, supply chains are facing disruptions due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and Russia's brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

Can the Minister of Transport tell this House what the government is doing to strengthen Canadian supply chains and make sure Canadians have access to these central goods they require?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague accurately stated, global and domestic supply chains are under pressure, and our government is taking action.

Budget 2022 has announced significant investment to strengthen supply chain infrastructure. I am also pleased to let my hon. colleagues know that we have established a supply chain task force that will provide our government with additional advice and recommendations. The task force is made up of experts and industry leaders, and I want to thank them for agreeing to join this task force and for their service to their country.

I look forward to working with them to make our supply chains even stronger.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' front-of-pack warning labels on ground beef and pork, something no other country in the world is doing, put our food security and our vulnerable supply chain at risk. Grocery costs are up 10% and almost a quarter of Canadian families are skipping meals because they cannot afford food, but the Liberals want to put a \$2-billion bureaucratic burden on a wholesome protein, making the food affordability crisis even worse.

Are these misleading and unnecessary warning labels on a single-ingredient, wholesome food really worth the crippling cost to Canadian farmers, businesses and, most importantly, consumers?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is concerned about the critically high rates of chronic disease in Canada. Across the country, two in five adults report having at least one of the 10 most common chronic illnesses, including cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. Poor diets, including those that are really high in saturated fats, sugar and sodium are primary risks for those diseases. That is unacceptable.

Canadians deserve more information. Nutrient-specific high in front-of-package labels will allow Canadians to quickly and easily identify foods that are high in these nutrients of public health concern and make more informed, educated and healthier food choices when at the grocery store.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is poised to become the first jurisdiction in the world to self-impose front-of-package labelling on ground beef and pork. These are single-ingredient products we are talking about here. This government continues to add bureaucratic constraints that hinder our international competitiveness.

What is the government basing its decision on? When will it abandon the implementation of this ridiculous regulation?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, unlike the hon. members opposite, our government is concerned about the critically high rates of chronic disease in Canada. Across the country, two in five adults report having at least one of the 10 most common chronic illnesses, including cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

A poor diet, particularly one that is high in saturated fats, sugar and sodium, is a primary risk factor for these diseases. That is unacceptable.

The “high in” nutrition label on the front of the package will allow Canadians to quickly identify—

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Bow River.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the utterly nonsensical proposal for front-of-package labelling on ground beef and pork is another attack on our agriculture industry. Canada would be the first country to do this, despite already exempting oth-

er single-ingredient whole food products like dairy. Bureaucratic red tape is once again standing in the way of Canadian agri-food production.

Can the Minister of Health justify this to Canadians, or is Health Canada intent on killing off the Canadian agri-food industry?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we on this side believe that more information for consumers is always a good thing. These labels are widely recognized by health organizations and the scientific community as an effective tool to help counteract rising rates of diet-related chronic disease that continue to rise in Canada. During our engagements with industry stakeholders, health experts and Canadians across the country, Health Canada analyzed the feedback received and made adjustments to the proposal, where supported by science.

Our government will always prioritize health policies based on scientific evidence. Let me be clear to Canadians that they will still produce and purchase ground meat.

\* \* \*

● (1505)

**SENIORS**

**Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, seniors in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga have worked very hard and helped shape this country. I am hearing from more and more seniors that they would like to stay at home and in their communities for as long as possible. Many vulnerable seniors are often forced to transition to residences and long-term care homes due to the lack of services.

Can the Minister of Seniors please update this House on the important work the government is doing to support seniors who wish to age at home?

**Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga for his advocacy for seniors.

We know Canadian seniors want to age in their own homes and communities for as long as possible, and that is why I was pleased to announce yesterday that our government is investing \$90 million over three years through our age well at home initiative, which will provide eligible organizations up to \$2 million per project through one of its two streams. Organizations will be able to apply through our online portal until July 22.

Members can rest assured that our government will always be there for seniors, particularly those most vulnerable.

\* \* \*

### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Poplar River First Nation, which has no all-weather road, depends on a barge in the summer to bring in essential goods and on the fishery as their economic engine. The engine on this barge literally blew up, leaving the community stranded. The first nation has declared a state of emergency. It has called for immediate help from all levels of government. Poplar River needs help now.

Will the Minister of Indigenous Services meet with the chief as soon as possible and provide the immediate assistance that the community, including fishers, is asking for now?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for advocating for Poplar River First Nation. The department is working with the community and has provided services and alternative means to get services and supplies to the community. We are working with the community to look at alternatives for replacing the barge. I will always meet with any chief who wishes to, at a time that works for both of us.

\* \* \*

### HOUSING

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Mr. Speaker, we are facing a housing crisis in this country, and my community is reeling. There are 53 people who have resorted to pitching tents on publicly owned land in downtown Kitchener, but they are being evicted at the end of the month. They are among the 412 people who we know are unsheltered in Waterloo region. Municipal leaders have been sounding the alarm for years, asking for more targeted housing funding and urgent mental health and addictions support.

If the Minister of Housing were to visit this encampment, what would he say to those living in tents, who have been left behind by decades of unjust housing policies?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, whenever Canadians find themselves on the street, it diminishes us all. We have invested over \$562 million in the federal Reaching Home program, which targets the most vulnerable Canadians on the street.

In addition to that, during the pandemic we invested another \$400 million. We are giving stability and certainly to frontline organizations serving the most vulnerable. Through the rapid housing initiative, as well as the co-op housing program, we are providing permanent housing solutions to house the most vulnerable people in our community.

\* \* \*

### PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Mike Farnworth, Minister of

### Oral Questions

Public Safety and Solicitor General for the Province of British Columbia, and the Hon. Josie Osborne, Minister of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship and Minister Responsible for Fisheries for the Province of British Columbia.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** The member for Kildonan—St. Paul is rising on a point of order.

• (1510)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations, and I believe you will find unanimous consent in the House for the following: That, given that the debate on combatting gun violence needs to be depoliticized, centred on the rights of victims and the safety of communities, the House call on the government to divide Bill C-21—

**The Speaker:** I am getting a lot of nays.

I have been getting a lot of feedback from members on both sides on unanimous consent motions. I encourage members to maybe talk to people beforehand and make sure that there is unanimous consent before bringing motions forward. This is for all members; I am not pointing out anyone in particular. We do not want to cut people off when they are trying to get a point across and trying to get unanimous consent.

I am sorry, but I do not believe we have unanimous consent.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could clarify the process. Is it your ruling going forward that if a member is saying “no”, you will stop the reading of the motion? I think we have had cases where some members were saying “no” and yet the member continued with the unanimous consent motion.

**The Speaker:** In fact, I have been getting this from both sides. Both government and opposition members have been asking for that exact type of behaviour, rather than let it all go through. Sometimes unanimous consent motions are used as a method of getting a message across, but that is what S.O. 31s are for. If we can just shift everything over, we can use it that way. We will do our best to make that happen.

## Government Orders

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

## BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2022, NO. 1

The House resumed from June 8, 2022, consideration of the motion that Bill C-19, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 7, 2022 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:10 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment of the hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn to the amendment of the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola to the motion at third reading of Bill C-19.

Call in the members.

• (1540)

[English]

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 143)

## YEAS

## Members

Aboultiaf	Aitchison
Albas	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benzen
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desilets
Doherty	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Ferrieri
Findlay	Fortin
Gallant	Garon
Gaudreau	Généreux
Gentuis	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	MacKenzie
Maguire	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Michaud	Moore

Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Plamondon	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shipley
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer— 140

## NAYS

## Members

Alghabra
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Beech
Bennett
Bittle
Blair
Blois
Bradford
Carr
Chagger
Champagne
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Damoff
Davies
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garrison
Gerretsen
Green
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen

## Government Orders

Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	McPherson
Mendès	Medicino
Miao	Miller
Morrice	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh	Sorbara
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thompson	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Virani
Weiler	Wilkinson
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zuberi — 174

## PAIRED

## Members

Anand	Boissonnault
Dowdall	Fast
Guilbeault	Hoback
Jeneroux	Joly
Ng	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzer — 12

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment to the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the amendment.

[*Translation*]

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the amendment be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoynes.

• (1545)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 144*)

## YEAS

## Members

Aboulaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benzen	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desilets	Doherty
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri	Findlay
Fortin	Gallant
Garon	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Kelly	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	MacKenzie
Maguire	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Plamondon	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shiplay
Simard	Simclair-Desgagné
Small	Soroka

*Government Orders*

Steinley  
Stewart  
Stubbs  
Therrien  
Tochor  
Trudel  
Van Popta  
Vidal  
Viersen  
Villemure  
Vuong  
Warkentin  
Webber  
Williamson

Ste-Marie  
Strahl  
Thériault  
Thomas  
Tolmie  
Uppal  
Vecchio  
Vien  
Vignola  
Vis  
Wagantall  
Waugh  
Williams  
Zimmer— 140

MacDonald (Malpeque)  
Maloney  
Masse  
May (Cambridge)  
McDonald (Avalon)  
McKay  
McLeod  
Mendès  
Miao  
Morrice  
Murray  
Noormohamed  
Oliphant  
Powlowski  
Robillard  
Rogers  
Sahota  
Saks  
Sarai  
Schieffe  
Shanahan  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Singh  
St-Onge  
Tassi  
Turnbull  
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Vandal  
Virani  
Wilkinson  
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MacGregor  
Martinez Ferrada  
Mathysen  
May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)  
McGuinty  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
McPherson  
Mendicino  
Miller  
Morrissey  
Naqvi  
O'Connell  
Petipas Taylor  
Qualtrough  
Rodriguez  
Romanado  
Sajjan  
Samson  
Scarpaleggia  
Sgro  
Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Sorbara  
Sudds  
Thompson  
Valdez  
van Koeverden  
Vandenbeld  
Weiler  
Yip  
Zarrillo

**NAYS**

## Members

Aldag  
Ali  
Angus  
Arya  
Atwin  
Badawey  
Baker  
Battiste  
Bendayan  
Bibeau  
Blaikie  
Blaney  
Boulerice  
Brière  
Casey  
Chahal  
Chatel  
Chiang  
Collins (Victoria)  
Coteau  
Damoff  
Desjarlais  
Dhillon  
Dong  
Dubourg  
Duguid  
Dzerowicz  
El-Khoury  
Fergus  
Fisher  
Fortier  
Fraser  
Fry  
Garneau  
Gazan  
Gould  
Hajdu  
Hardie  
Holland  
Hughes  
Hutchings  
Idlout  
Jaczek  
Jones  
Julian  
Kelloway  
Khera  
Kusmierczyk  
Lalonde  
Lametti  
Lapointe  
Lauzon  
Lebouthillier  
Long  
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)

Alghabra  
Anandasangaree  
Arseneault  
Ashton  
Bachrach  
Bains  
Barron  
Beech  
Bennett  
Bittle  
Blair  
Blois  
Bradford  
Carr  
Chagger  
Champagne  
Chen  
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)  
Cormier  
Dabrusin  
Davies  
Dhaliwal  
Diab  
Drouin  
Duclous  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Ehsassi  
Erskine-Smith  
Fillmore  
Fonseca  
Fragiskatos  
Freeland  
Gaheer  
Garrison  
Gerretsen  
Green  
Hanley  
Hepfner  
Housefather  
Hussen  
Iacono  
Ien  
Johns  
Jowhari  
Kayabaga  
Khalid  
Koutrakis  
Kwan  
Lambropoulos  
Lamoureux  
Lattanzio  
LeBlanc  
Lightbound  
Longfield  
MacAulay (Cardigan)

Anand  
Dowdall  
Guilbeault  
Jeneroux  
Ng  
O'Toole

**PAIRED**

## Members

Boissonnault  
Fast  
Hoback  
Joly  
O'Regan  
Patzner— 12

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment lost.

[*English*]

The next question is on the main motion. May I dispense?

**Some hon. members:** No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

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

The hon. member for Brampton North.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 145*)

**YEAS**

## Members

Aldag

Alghabra

*Government Orders*

Ali	Anandasangaree	O'Connell	Oliphant
Angus	Arseneault	Paupé	Perron
Arya	Ashton	Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Atwin	Bachrach	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Badawey	Bains	Robillard	Rodriguez
Baker	Barron	Rogers	Romanado
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste	Sahota	Sajjan
Beaulieu	Beech	Saks	Samson
Bendayan	Bennett	Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Bérubé	Bibeau	Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Bittle	Blaikie	Serré	Sgro
Blair	Blanchet	Shanahan	Sheehan
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Blois	Boulerice	Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Bradford	Brière	Singh	Sorbara
Brunelle-Duceppe	Carr	Ste-Marie	St-Onge
Casey	Chabot	Sudds	Tassi
Chagger	Chahal	Taylor Roy	Thériault
Champagne	Champoux	Therrien	Thompson
Chatel	Chen	Trudel	Turnbull
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Valdez	Van Bynen
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier	van Koeverden	Vandal
Coteau	Dabrusin	Vandenbeld	Vignola
Damoff	Davies	Villemure	Virani
DeBellefeuille	Desilets	Weiler	Wilkinson
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Yip	Zahid
Dhillon	Diab	Zarrillo	Zuberi— 202
Dong	Drouin		
Dubourg	Duclos		
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)		
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi		
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith	Abouttaif	Aitchison
Fergus	Fillmore	Albas	Allison
Fisher	Fonseca	Arnold	Baldinelli
Fortier	Fortin	Barlow	Barrett
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Benzen	Berthold
Freeland	Fry	Bezan	Block
Gaheer	Garneau	Bragdon	Brassard
Garon	Garrison	Brock	Calkins
Gaudreau	Gazan	Caputo	Carrie
Gerretsen	Gould	Chambers	Chong
Green	Hajdu	Cooper	Dalton
Hanley	Hardie	Dancho	Davidson
Hepfner	Holland	Deltell	d'Entremont
Housefather	Hughes	Doherty	Dreeschen
Hussen	Hutchings	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Iacono	Idlout	Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Ien	Jaczek	Falk (Provencher)	Ferreri
Johns	Jones	Findlay	Gallant
Jowhari	Julian	Généreux	Genius
Kayabaga	Kelloway	Gladu	Godin
Khalid	Khera	Goodridge	Gourde
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk	Gray	Hallan
Kwan	Lalonde	Kelly	Kitchen
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Kmiec	Kram
Lamoureux	Lapointe	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Larouche	Lattanzio	Kusie	Lake
Lauzon	LeBlanc	Lantsman	Lawrence
Lebouthillier	Lemire	Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Lightbound	Long	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Lloyd	Lobb
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacKenzie	Maguire
MacGregor	Maloney	Martel	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	McLean	Melillo
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty	Moore	Morantz
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Morrice	Morrison
McLeod	McPherson	Motz	Muys
Mendès	Mendicino	Nater	Paul-Hus
Miao	Michaud	Perkins	Poilievre
Miller	Morrissey	Rayes	Redekopp
Murray	Naqvi	Reid	Rempel Garner
Noormohamed	Normandin	Richards	Roberts

**NAYS**

## Members

*Government Orders*

Rood	Ruff
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shipley	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Wagh	Webber
Williams	Williamson
Zimmer— 115	

**PAIRED**

## Members

Anand	Boissonnault
Dowdall	Fast
Guilbeault	Hoback
Jeneroux	Joly
Ng	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzer— 12

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

\* \* \*

[English]

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to see you in the chair. I hope you are getting your strength back. You sound like it. You are doing a good job of keeping everybody in good spirits.

Before my question, there are a couple of issues that I want to bring to the attention of the government House leader.

Number one is that we are requesting a take-note debate on the issue of food security, which is having a significant effect around the world, as members know, as a result of many geopolitical issues.

The second thing is a request to split Bill C-21 so that we can work on victims and the protection of victims in domestic violence.

The third thing is that there have been significant concerns among stakeholders and advocates right across the country regarding Bill C-11. We are seeing some draconian measures being proposed by the government to deal with this piece of legislation. I am concerned about that.

Before I ask for the schedule, I am wondering what the government House leader's plan is to effectively silence the voices of millions of people who voted for opposition MPs in this place and, furthermore, what his plans are to contribute to a further decline in democracy in this place over the course of the next week.

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the cornerstone of democracy is voting and showing up to this place and participating, and that is of course what we do. Whether it is Bill C-11 or Bill C-21, there will be an opportunity, obviously, to continue debating legislation.

On Bill C-11 specifically, there were nine days at committee and many days at second reading. We have opportunities at third reading, and it will be going to the Senate. It is taking essential action to protect Canadian creators and Canadian heritage. We are proud to support this bill, and part of the thrust and parry of this place is that sometimes we disagree. That is not a representation of a decline in democracy; it is proof of it working.

This afternoon, we will continue with the report stage of Bill C-5 in respect of mandatory minimums. We will then call second reading of Bill C-21, the firearms legislation.

Tomorrow, we will debate government Motion No. 16 regarding proceedings for Bill C-11, as I was mentioning, on the Broadcasting Act.

When we return next week, we will focus on this government motion debate and continue our work on Bill C-5 and Bill C-11, as well as on Bill C-14 concerning electoral representation.

\* \* \*

**CRIMINAL CODE**

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today to Bill C-5, a piece of government legislation aimed at reducing sentences for crimes, including very serious crimes such as sexual assault, kidnapping and weapons trafficking. Many of my colleagues on this side have ably spoken to the core issues in this bill, in particular the question of whether lower sentences and conditional sentences are appropriate for these kinds of very serious offences. I am not going to repeat their arguments today. Instead, I want to respond to what seems to be the main rationale that the government is using to defend this legislation.

Comments from government members on this bill have generally avoided reference to the substantive measures in it and, in particular, to the changes to sentences for serious violent crimes. It is revealing that members of the government do not want to actually talk about and defend their decision to lower sentences for serious crimes.

The government's attempt to justify this bill has focused on noting, correctly, how the problem of systemic racism leads to the over-representation of Black and indigenous people in our justice system, but then claiming, incorrectly, that this bill somehow addresses that problem. It is a fact that there is nothing in this bill to address any kind of racism. It contains no measures respecting anti-racism training, no measures to discourage racist behaviour, no funding for communities that are victims of racism and no special procedures to protect the rights of historically marginalized communities when they encounter the justice system.

In fact, while the government evokes the challenges facing Black and indigenous Canadians every time this bill is discussed, the bill itself does not even contain the words “Black” or “indigenous”. A quick search of this bill shows that the bill actually says nothing about race or racism, either. This is a bill that is not about, and says nothing about, the racism facing Black and indigenous Canadians, yet the government's justification for this bill is to claim that it would do something that it demonstrably would not do for those communities.

The government purports to believe that lowering sentences overall will somehow address the disproportionate representation of certain minority communities in the prison population. This seems, on the face of it, to portray a certain misunderstanding of how fractions work. Changing the average sentence for a particular crime from, say, four years to three years would do nothing to change the proportion of people from a particular community who are serving time for that crime. Reducing overall sentences would do nothing to change the proportion of those in prison who are from a particular community. Any mathematically sound strategy for reducing over-representation would obviously need to reduce sentences for the over-represented group only, increase sentences for the under-represented group only, or, best of all, identify and confront the root cause of over-representation in the first place. However, reducing sentences for both over-represented and under-represented groups by the same proportion would not actually address the phenomenon of over- or under-representation.

In fairness to the government's position, it is not always quite that simple. It may be that there are certain crimes where the over-representation of certain communities is greater than other crimes. For example, in the case of drug crimes, there may be certain kinds of drugs that are more prevalent in some communities than others. There are cases and places where offences involving drugs that are more common in minority communities have carried more severe sentences than offences involving equivalent drugs that are more common in majority communities. In such cases, measures to equalize the sentencing for equivalent kinds of substances that are more or less common in different communities would be a step toward addressing the problem of over-representation. However, that is not what Bill C-5 would do.

Bill C-5 would not make these kinds of granular adjustments. Rather, Bill C-5 is a relatively short bill that would lower sentences for broad categories of offences. I see no reason why these reductions in sentencing parameters would impact over-representation in any way.

Perhaps I can make this point clearer with an analogy. We know that Black and indigenous people are over-represented in our justice system and also under-represented in our post-secondary system. We need to address the way that systemic racism leads to over-representation in penal institutions and under-representation in institutions that often lead individuals to positions of power and privilege. If members were to imagine—

● (1615)

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order. The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles on a point of order.

### *Government Orders*

**Mr. Luc Desilets:** Madam Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, I should mention that he is speaking too quickly for the interpreters to keep up with him. They tell us that it is very difficult.

He is hyperactive like me. Out of respect for the interpreters, I would ask him to slow down if possible.

[*English*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I know that we have raised this in the past, so once again, I am wondering if the hon. member could slow down a bit to ensure that every parliamentarian hears what he has to say. It is very difficult for the interpreters to interpret properly if the speed of the speech is too quick.

I am not sure if the hon. member has provided a copy of his speech to the interpreters. If not, again, I would remind all members to please do so. It is something that we hear about on a regular basis. It is very difficult for interpreters to be able to follow the speakers in the House.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, if I could speak to the same point of order. In this case, I provided my notes in advance to the interpreters. I have a great deal of respect for what they do.

It is a bit of a challenge when members want to deliver a certain amount of content in a limited time frame, and we are under time allocation of course as well, but I think it is a question of the ability of members to need to convey ideas in a limited time frame, so—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Again, we have to ensure that all members are able to understand what is being said in the House. That is what we need to do. Hon. members generally know how much they can put within the 10- or 20-minute time frame, so it is not about rushing but about making sure the speech is being delivered as it should.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan can continue.

● (1620)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, I hope the interpreters are able to deliver the content, but I am entitled to give my speech as a member, and I hope that, given I have provided the notes in advance, this issue will be addressed.

### Government Orders

I was speaking about under-representation in post-secondary institutions. I imagine if I were to propose that the way to reduce under-representation of Black and indigenous peoples in universities was to reduce the length of degree programs, we would recognize that did not make sense. If I were to claim that reducing the length of an undergraduate degree from four years to three years would address the under-representation of people from particular communities, we would recognize that is obviously absurd, because changing the length of a degree program does nothing to change the proportion of people from different communities who are there or to address the underlying factors that lead to under-representation. What is true for the length of degree programs is also true for the length of criminal penalties, which is that changing the overall length does not change the proportion.

I want to now speak about the relationship between racial justice and judicial discretion. Bill C-5 lowers sentences for a variety of crimes, including very serious crimes, and does so in part by widening the window for judicial discretion. I believe that judicial discretion, as well as the setting of benchmarks and parameters by the legislature, are both important elements in sentencing. In a democratic society, it is right and important for the people's representatives to deliberate and give direction about the kinds of sentences they see as appropriate for certain categories of crimes. It is also important for judges to be able to exercise their discretion in accordance with the particular facts of each case, using the parameters and formulas established by the people's representatives.

One key function of sentencing parameters set by the legislature is to help ensure relative consistency. If the facts of two different cases are virtually identical, then the sentences should also be virtually identical, even if the two defendants go before two different judges. The most effective way to ensure that two different judges in two different courtrooms apply a similar sentence to a similar set of facts is to have something such as sentencing starting points set by the legislative branch. Too much individual discretion leads to inconsistent decision-making. One risk of giving too much discretion to judges is that they, like all of us, have unconscious bias, a possible partial explanation for the over-representation of Black and indigenous peoples in prisons is that the unconscious bias of judges leads to relatively longer sentences being applied in cases with Black and indigenous defendants.

To be fair to judges, I do not know for sure if that is the case or not, but insofar as parliamentarians regularly identify the presence of systemic racism and unconscious bias in virtually all other institutions, it seems at least consistent to acknowledge that unconscious bias impacts the decisions of judges as well. If that is the case, then widening the range of judicial discretion, as Bill C-5 does, actually risks exacerbating the problem of over-representation by allowing more space for subjective determinations based on how a judge evaluates the character and motivation of a defendant.

Relying more on the work of legislatures to establish that a certain type of crime should carry a certain type of sentence in general reduces the range of difference that could be informed by unconscious bias applied to individual cases. This is not necessarily a defence of the idea of mandatory minimums as such, but I simply want to point out that, insofar as unconscious bias leads to differential outcomes when a decision-maker has broad discretion, a law

which broadens the range for that discretion is more likely to increase than decrease the problem of over-representation.

I suspect many members of this House will be familiar with the iconic opening of *The Godfather* trilogy. It is a scene about criminal justice and also about racism. The character Amerigo Bonasera, a Sicilian immigrant who had long trusted the American justice system, is seeking justice for a daughter who was violently beaten by two privileged young men. The racial element implied in the film is clear in the original novel, with Bonasera noting that the parents of the perpetrators in this case were "his age but more American in their dress". The judge opts to be lenient to the perpetrators saying, "'because of your youth, your clean records, because of your fine families, and because the law in its majesty does not seek vengeance.... Sentence to be suspended.'" This injustice, the exempting of two young men from the consequences of their crime because of their so-called "fine families", leads Amerigo to lose faith in the legal system and instead rely on the mafia to get what he considers justice.

This is fictionalization of course, but it is compelling because it is very real to the circumstances and experiences of many people. Judicial discretion creates the space for preferencing those whose experience and background the decision-maker identifies with and, in this case, drives a further wedge between a minority community and the state, because Bonasera sees how the system is less likely to have the back of a person who comes from his background.

This raises a critical question: What does this bill do for Black, indigenous and other minority communities who are victims of crime and who want the police and courts to be present and consistent in order to protect them and their families from crime? What does Bill C-5 offer them? It offers them nothing. In fact, it offers them worse than nothing because it does not actually address the real problem of racism. It does not address differential outcomes, and it makes every community less safe by causing the early release of serious violent criminals from any and all backgrounds.

• (1625)

I have one more point I want to make. Black and indigenous people are over-represented in the prison population. Another group that is over-represented in the prison population is men. Men actually account for over 90% of adult admissions to federal custody. That is a very significant over-representation problem.

It becomes even more striking when we overlay statistics for race and gender. Indigenous women make up about 2.5% of the total population and 3% of federal prison admissions. That is relatively close. Statistically speaking, the phenomenon of indigenous over-representation in prison is overwhelmingly a problem of the over-representation of indigenous men. Over 25% of total federal prison admissions are indigenous men. Clearly, gender as well as race has to be part of the conversation about over-representation.

This raises challenging questions. Does our justice system have a problem with systemic sexism? How might the government go about trying to address the over-representation of men in the system?

I do not have time to answer those questions, but what is clear is that Bill C-5 does nothing to address the issue of over-representation of particular communities. The bill itself makes no mention of the issue of over-representation or racism, and it contains no measures which targets those problems. Reducing sentences for serious crimes makes our communities less safe, and it makes victims and potential victims of all races and from all communities more vulnerable.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech, and in it he purports that mandatory minimum penalties do not contribute to over-representation of Black, indigenous and racialized folks across the country.

That is not the opinion shared by those from the Black Legal Action Centre, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies and the Women's Legal Education & Action Fund who have called for the repealing of all mandatory minimum penalties for exactly that reason.

What does the member have to say to experts like these?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, the member identified a number of stakeholders who have a particular point of view, and I do not doubt that the committee heard from a broad range of stakeholders with different points of view on the bill.

My point was fairly specific. It was simply to say that when we broaden the range of discretion for decision-making in a situation where the decision-maker may, or likely does, have unconscious bias, broadening the range of discretion for that decision-maker does not make the problem better. It makes the problem worse.

We could talk about alternative mechanisms, like sentencing, starting points or clearer parameters for judicial decision-making, but in the absence of those things, when the government proposes a bill that widens the latitude for judicial discretion and there are concerns about unconscious bias, it does not make any sense to me to say that that is somehow going to address the problem of over-representation. It is not.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I listened very intently to the member opposite's comments on Bill C-5.

I had the opportunity to sit on the justice committee where the bill was deliberated. We heard from witness after witness talking

### *Government Orders*

about the negative impact of mandatory minimum sentences, especially on those who are of indigenous or racialized backgrounds.

I want to talk to the point around discretion. In the member's opinion, is it not better and more appropriate for judges who are presiding over cases, who have the benefit of listening to detailed evidence and cross-examinations, to be able to determine, if someone is found guilty, what the appropriate sentence should be, as opposed to legislators preordaining a mandatory minimum sentence when we do not know what the circumstances may be?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, clearly, judicial discretion and parameters set by legislators both have a role.

The question of what is the appropriate sentence for a particular category of crime is a philosophical question. It is a moral question. It is something that in a democratic society the legislature, in general terms, should pronounce on.

The question to what extent those broad parameters apply to the particulars of a case is a question of the facts of the case at hand, a question that requires surgical discretion that responds to the particular factors. That is why the legislature should not say this particular offence always or in every case carries exactly this sentence. It is legitimate for the legislature to say that, in general, we wish to express that we think this type of crime proportionately accords with this type of sentence.

● (1630)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

Is he aware that incarceration is completely ineffective in the case of minor sentences and especially sentences given to offenders with respect to drugs and drug use?

There are no empirical studies that show that these prison sentences are effective.

Is he aware of that and does he agree?

[*English*]

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, we need to be very clear that there are no mandatory minimums for personal possession-related offences for drugs. Our party does not support mandatory minimums for personal possession for personal use offences. We do believe that it should be against the law to possess drugs for personal use, but we do not support mandatory minimums in those cases.

I am concerned about the fact that this legislation reduces sentences for very serious violent crimes like sexual assault, kidnapping and weapons trafficking. Those are clearly very different cases from the cases the member spoke about.

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Madam Speaker, to begin, I would like to say that I am both pleased and disappointed to be speaking to Bill C-5. I am pleased because it makes several advances in the area of diversion, and the Bloc Québécois fully believes that it is a step in the right direction. However, I am disappointed because Bill C-5 addresses the issue of mandatory minimum sentences, but it does not get to the heart of the problem or offer any solutions. I will come back to these two aspects in detail a bit later.

First of all, I want to condemn the fact that our request that the government divide this bill went unheeded. I want to be clear: Diversion and the abolition of mandatory minimum sentences are two very different issues. That is why the Bloc Québécois feels that it would have been preferable, in the interest of transparency towards our constituents, for elected officials to have the opportunity to vote on each of these subjects separately. Since I cannot do that, I will spend the next few minutes sharing my reservations about the bill.

I will start with what I do not like about Bill C-5. First, it does not solve the fundamental problem with mandatory minimum sentences. Minimum sentences are problematic because they are subject to Constitutional challenges for a simple reason: They apply to all adults without regard for the circumstances in which the offence was committed. The outcome is that sometimes a harsh sentence is handed down when the extenuating circumstances would warrant a lesser or different sentence. The very principle of justice is sacrificed when judges are not given any flexibility to assess each situation and its special circumstances.

However, there is a simple solution that we, the legislators, can implement to address this problem. We can introduce a clause that would enable a judge to depart from the mandatory minimum sentence when warranted by exceptional circumstances. With such a provision, we could have prevented many injustices and saved public financial resources, which are getting gobbled up by legal challenges of mandatory minimum sentences instead of being used to fund programs or infrastructure for Quebeckers and Canadians.

This amendment was proposed by the Bloc Québécois in committee but was rejected. The Liberal Party also moved a similar amendment, but when the time came to defend it, the government simply lacked the political courage to do so. It chickened out and did not even have the decency to defend it.

To all that, I would add that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action 32 recommended that a similar provision be added to the Criminal Code. Basically, the government messed up the opportunity to listen and do what needs to be done to move forward as a society along the path to reconciliation with first nations. That is deplorable.

The other thing that bothers me about mandatory minimum sentences is that there is a lack of consistency with respect to which ones will be abolished. When the government announced the bill in February, it said it would be abolishing mandatory minimum sentences, except for serious offences. That makes sense. As lawmakers, we do want to maintain some degree of control over sentences for crimes against the person. However, the bill abolishes minimum sentences for crimes such as discharging a firearm with intent or

recklessly and robbery or extortion with a firearm. We see those as serious crimes.

• (1635)

It would have been preferable to maintain mandatory minimum sentences for these serious crimes, especially in a context marked by an increase in gun violence and in which public concern is palpable. In short, we would have preferred a less ideological approach from the government on these issues. I hope that the criticisms and suggestions I have raised will be heard by the government.

Now that I have outlined the areas where an amendment would be required, I would like to take the time I have left to talk about what we like about Bill C-5, or, more specifically, the diversion measures.

We must recognize that the war on drugs has never been, is not, and will never be the solution to the opioid crisis and to other drugs that are wreaking havoc in Quebec and Canada. After decades of gathering evidence leading to this inevitable conclusion, it is time to acknowledge this reality and change our approach to treating addiction problems. We need to recognize them for what they really are and that is health problems, first and foremost.

That is the main principle behind Bill C-5, and I must admit that, like all of my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I am relatively satisfied with the progress made. We understand that the government wants to emulate the success Portugal has had in tackling drug abuse. I think it is entirely appropriate to rely on the evidence and follow best practices to move forward on this issue.

I firmly believe that the benefits of offering diversion measures will soon be felt in our communities and our justice system. Rather than dragging people through the courts unnecessarily and at great expense, we can dedicate those resources to treatment and education. This will also enable our justice system to focus on the cases that are truly problematic, in other words, the drug traffickers.

The only caveat I would add about Bill C-5 on these issues is a simple reminder to the government that Portugal's success relies on frontline services. In order for these services to be delivered, additional resources will be needed. Of course I am talking about an increase in health transfers and an increase in social transfers.

Someone who is trying to recover from addiction needs access to a series of support measures during their most vulnerable period in that transition to recovery. These measures include housing, employment assistance, psychological support and, of course, health care services.

I remind the government that it also has health care responsibilities and that it must sit down with Quebec and the provinces and increase health transfers to 35% of system costs. This is how we can achieve our objectives when it comes to tackling drug addiction.

I want to conclude by talking about decriminalization for simple possession. I think that we have found a balance with Bill C-5 and that expungement of a criminal record after two years for this type of offence is a good compromise. It will take some time for our procedures to adjust to this new approach. I believe that we must consolidate our network before we move forward with decriminalization and that diversion programs are the best approach for the time being.

• (1640)

[English]

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the balance the member brought to his speech. I wanted to hear a bit more on the diversion of those with addictions to treatment and other things since it is such a pressing issue. The member said he believes that is the way to go but that we need to build up programs. I would love to hear from the member what he thinks Canada and the provinces should be doing to help those who are facing these addictions.

[Translation]

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Speaker, it is not a question of what the provinces should do, but what the federal government should do. This is the federal Parliament; we are the federal lawmakers.

As I said in my speech, if the federal government wants to facilitate the diversion process, it must increase health transfers. The premiers of all the provinces, including Quebec, and the Quebec National Assembly are unanimously calling for that. This request has support, even here in the House of Commons, from the Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party and, of course, the Bloc Québécois.

I would like to remind my colleague from Brampton North that, here, we are the ones who decide what happens in the federal Parliament. The provinces are autonomous and it is not up to the federal government to impose its legislation and decide for Quebec and the provinces.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up on what my colleague just said about Bill C-5 in terms of helping people who have addiction problems, among others. This is a public health problem, so it is important to increase health transfers.

It seems to be hard for the federal government to understand what its responsibility is and what it needs to do. The same thing is happening at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. For example, yesterday, even the Conservatives opposed the fact that health transfers and social services are needed to help women experiencing intimate partner violence. Something is not getting through. It is the federal government's role to make these transfers so that organizations in Quebec can then help women experiencing intimate partner violence, as well as people with addiction prob-

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lems. Once again, I get the impression that the Bloc Québécois is the only party defending this idea.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Speaker, Quebec has fantastic social programs. However, these programs require financial support from the federal government, and that support is completely lacking. The fiscal imbalance is a well-known problem.

There was nothing in the federal government's latest budget about increasing health transfers. Now it is proposing something new, diversion and decriminalization. Making all these changes requires resources.

Obviously, if we want to be proactive in providing assistance, helping people heal and preventing addiction, we will have to take certain approaches, and the federal government can definitely help by increasing health transfers.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. I enjoyed working with him at the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans today.

Given that criminal records for personal possession of drugs are a significant barrier to employment and housing, which are two important factors in recovery from addiction, why does the Bloc Québécois oppose the NDP's amendment to expunge all criminal records for personal possession offences within two years?

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is not necessarily closed to the NDP's proposal. We are saying that Quebec and the provinces will need some time to adjust. All these legislative changes have tremendous consequences for people on the ground who will have to deal with the repercussions of these decisions.

What the Bloc Québécois is saying today is that there needs to be better planning to prevent things from derailing. It will be much more difficult later for the people working directly on the ground to deal with the consequences of the legislative decisions we are making in the House.

• (1645)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order.

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, Public Safety; the hon. member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington, Fisheries and Oceans; the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan, Health.

[English]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure and an honour to rise in the House today to speak to this important bill.

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By way of introduction, it is important to note that this bill was reintroduced from the 43rd Parliament. It is an almost identical copy, with no changes except for the omission of coordinating amendments, which made some changes to the Firearms Act and adjusted some penalties for firearms offences. The reason I point out that it has been reintroduced is that this shows how slowly sometimes very important legislation moves in this place. That is particularly regrettable when we see the profound impacts that this legislation has on communities and people in this country.

Bill C-5 is the result of the justice minister's 2021 mandate letter, in which he was instructed to "introduce legislation and make investments that take action to address systemic inequities in the criminal justice system, including to promote enhanced use of pre- and post-charge diversion and to better enable courts to impose sentences appropriate to the circumstances of individual cases." This bill responds to that, in part, and it does so by proposing to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for all drug offences. It would also remove mandatory minimums for some tobacco and firearms offences. It is important to note that all of these mandatory minimums were added by the Conservatives in their Safe Streets and Communities Act, Bill C-10, in 2011. This bill would also make conditional sentencing orders more widely available by removing the prohibition of using them for more serious offences, and it would make it possible for police and prosecutors to divert more drug cases from the courts.

This bill raises fundamental questions of effective criminal justice in Canada. It is fair to say that all parliamentarians across party lines share a number of goals in this area. We all want to see reduced crime, and we all want to keep people safe. We all want to protect victims, and we recognize that there is much more work to do in that area. We all want to reduce recidivism and make sure that in our criminal justice system, when people transgress and are part of the system, they come out and hopefully do not reoffend. Finally, we all want to address the root causes of crime.

I will pause for a moment and speak about the root causes of crime.

I was part of the public safety committee back in 2009 and 2010, when it conducted a study of mental health and addictions in the federal corrections system. In conducting that study, we toured federal corrections facilities across the country and went into federal penitentiaries to meet a wide variety of stakeholders. Among other facilities, we went into the Kent, Mountain and Pacific institutions in British Columbia. We went into an aboriginal healing lodge in British Columbia, as well as Ferndale. We went to an aboriginal women's corrections facility in Saskatchewan called Okimaw Ohci. We went to Kingston, an infamous Canadian federal penitentiary that is now closed. We went to Dorchester in New Brunswick and Archambault in Quebec. We also, by the way, went to the U.K. and Norway and toured institutions in those countries as well, to get a comparative example.

We talked to everybody in these institutions. We talked to offenders, guards, wardens, nurses, chaplains, families, anybody who had anything whatsoever to do with working inside a federal institution. What is burned into my brain to this day is a shocking number, which is that across all institutions in Canada, the common number we heard was that 70% of offenders in federal institutions

suffer from an addiction or a mental health issue. Probingly, we asked everybody, including the guards and wardens, what percentage of those people they thought would not be in prison but for their mental health issues or addictions. The answer we got, again reliably and consistently, was 70%. What that told us was that we are not, by and large, locking up criminals or bad people. We are locking up people with mental health issues and addictions, and most of their crimes are related to those two issues.

● (1650)

I think it is important to pause for a moment and talk about social determinants of crime, because there are highly correlated factors, like poverty, marginalization, childhood trauma and abuse, and others, that go into that prison population. By and large, I did not see a lot of white-collar millionaires in a single one of those institutions. What I saw were a lot of poor, indigenous, racialized, addicted and mentally ill Canadians.

The other thing I think we need to talk about, when we talk about root causes, is how well Canada's justice system and our federal corrections institutions respond to that. At that time, the answer was "not very well", and worse. At that time, the Conservatives did something that I consider to be politically worthy of condemnation, which is that they politicized the issue of crime for political gain. They pursued a tough-on-crime agenda, because they thought that by preying on people's fears and sense of victimhood, they could gain political points, and they used prisoners and the prison system as pawns in that regard. By doing that, the very small number of rehabilitative services in Canada's correctional system at that time were closed by the Conservatives.

For instance, when I was visiting Kent, I walked into a huge, dark room, and when the lights were turned on, I saw it was full of equipment, such as band saws, Skilsaws and all sorts of construction equipment. There was a program where federal offenders were taught basic vocational skills, and they were making things like furniture, which was then purchased by the federal government at cost. Not only were we teaching marginalized people actual skills that they could use in the workplace when they got out, since more than 95% of offenders in federal institutions come back into society at some point, but the federal government was getting quality furniture at a below-market price. It was a win-win. However, that program was closed by the Conservatives.

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When I visited the Kingston penitentiary, and also Dorchester, they had extraordinarily successful prison farm programs whereby the people inside were able to earn credit for good behaviour and gain privileges to work with agricultural projects and farm animals. By the way, there was a prize cow population at Kingston. The bloodlines were fantastic, and it was an absolutely outstanding herd. Members should have seen the impact that these programs had on the emotional and rehabilitative personalities of the people inside. However, those programs were closed by the Conservatives.

To this day, I say that we are doing a terrible job in Canada's correctional institutions of actually responding to the real needs of most offenders and ensuring that when they come out they do not repeat their offence. Here is the bottom line: I am not saying this out of a sense of compassion only; I am saying this because I do not want a single offender in Canada's correctional institutions to come back into society and reoffend, and that is exactly what they are going to do if we do not adjust and respond to their real needs.

I want to talk quickly about mandatory minimums. The bottom line is that I, and my party, oppose mandatory minimums, except for the most serious of crimes, where, of course, they are appropriate. Why? It is because they do not work; they do not have any deterrent effect. It is because they have a discriminatory effect. It is because they are largely unconstitutional. All we have to do is look to the United States, which is the pioneer of using such sentences, to see what effect they have on crime. The United States locks up the largest percentage of its population of any country on the planet.

I support Bill C-5. It is time that we start adopting progressive, rational, effective policies to keep Canadians safe. Punishing and keeping people in prison longer without access to the services they need does not work. It is cruel, and it does not keep Canadians safe. It is time to have policies that actually keep Canadians and victims safe in this country. Let us adopt the bill and take a first step towards that.

• (1655)

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the passion that the member brought to his speech, especially with the experience from his riding, having seen programs that run well and those that have been stripped of funding.

As we have sat through many hours of debate on this issue, and even in question period, I have been hearing a lot of misinformation coming from the official opposition, the Conservative Party. I was wondering if the member could help address some of those issues, because I am sure that when people in the community are hearing this, they think this piece of legislation would put armed, dangerous criminals back out on the streets.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Madam Speaker, of course, I guess this is a matter of perspective. If one believes that punishing people more harshly and putting addicts and people with mental illness in jail cells for longer will keep communities safe, then I suppose one will critique this bill, as the official opposition is doing.

However, we actually believe it is important to make an individualized assessment of what has happened, get to the root cause of the crime and address that as a better approach for that person, who has transgressed our laws. I do not want in any way to be taken to

say that I am countenancing the violation of our laws. That is wrong, and we as parliamentarians need to do everything we can to stop that. The question is whether we adopt effective measures to do so. Between spreading misinformation or using crime as a political wedge issue and adopting evidence-based policy that works, I certainly prefer the latter approach, and I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have a two-part question for the member.

The first part is that I agree with him that we need to do more for mental health and addictions, especially within our criminal system, so I would just like the member to explain where in Bill C-5 the Liberals address the needed resources for mental health and addictions. Where in the bill does it state that?

The second part is that the member talks about these mandatory minimums being done by previous Conservative governments. When I look at the table of the 12 mandatory minimums that are being addressed in Bill C-5, there are only two of them that were brought in by Prime Minister Harper. One was brought in by Prime Minister Trudeau senior, and the other nine by Prime Minister Chrétien.

Could the member allude to how this is tied to the previous Conservative government, when in fact the vast majority of mandatory minimums that are being proposed to be dropped in this legislation were actually done by previous Liberal governments?

**Mr. Don Davies:** Madam Speaker, I would answer that by approaching the latter part first.

I had both the privilege and the trauma of suffering through the Harper government the whole time. I have been in this House for 14 years, and it was a major political issue the entire time of the Harper Conservatives to adopt this tough-on-crime approach, where they did bring in mandatory minimums. In fact, those are the mandatory minimums that are being struck down by the courts as being unconstitutional, because the Conservatives did not care about the law and they did not care about the Constitution; they cared about trying to look like they were tough on crime to the public.

By the way, if those methods worked and were effective, I might support them, but they do not.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway, and I would like him to explain something. He said that minimum mandatory sentences do not deter people from committing crimes. Does he believe that softer sentences will be a greater deterrent?

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I would also like him to comment on the issue of certain groups in our society, such as racialized people and indigenous people, being overrepresented in penitentiaries.

Should we not be proactively working with these groups to reduce inequality, poverty and the cost of housing and to ensure that we address the root causes of criminal behaviour?

• (1700)

[English]

**Mr. Don Davies:** Madam Speaker, absolutely, we need to start addressing in a more meaningful way the social determinants of crime. That is part of it. Also, I think the bottom line is that we need to give our courts and judges the tools they need to make proper individualized assessments to find out what the root causes of the person and the circumstances are before them. Punishment is an aspect of our penal system, so that is part of it, but it has to have its proper perspective. We have to understand what the real cause of the crime before them is, and we have to address that. That is the only way we can keep Canadians safe.

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am very glad to rise today to speak on Bill C-5, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Throughout the years, Canadians have witnessed the disproportionate representation of indigenous peoples, Black Canadians and members of marginalized communities in prisons across the country, including in my home province of Nova Scotia. Following the last federal election, our government promised to reintroduce the former bill, Bill C-22, during the first 100 days of our mandate, and that is exactly what the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada did in December 2021. Bill C-5, as it is now known, supports our government's efforts to eliminate the systemic racism in Canada's criminal justice system that has been reported on for years by commissions of inquiry.

The main objective of Bill C-5 is to ensure public safety while at the same time ensuring that the responses to criminal conduct are fairer and more effective. Importantly, the bill would help reduce the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples, Black Canadians and marginalized communities in prisons from coast to coast to coast, which we heard the member for Vancouver Kingsway describe.

Bill C-5 would also ensure that courts across the country can continue to impose severe sentences for serious and violent crimes. Canadians all around the country desire a fair and competent criminal justice system. They want their provinces and their cities and their neighbourhoods to be and to feel safe at all times. They want to have faith in their justice system. They want to believe that offenders will be held responsible for their crimes in a transparent, fair and consistent way that upholds our country's ideals. As members of Parliament, we must listen to these concerns and then work hard to act on them, and act on them we have.

Bill C-5 includes three categories of reforms. The first would repeal mandatory minimum penalties for all drug offences, some firearm offences and one tobacco-related offence. Second, it would allow for a greater use of conditional sentence orders, or CSOs, and I will come back to those shortly. The third reform would require

police and prosecutors to consider other measures for simple possession of drugs, such as diversion to addiction treatment programs.

Bill C-5 would repeal mandatory minimum penalties for certain offences that are associated with the overrepresentation of the groups I have mentioned.

The numbers do not lie. In 1999-2000, indigenous people represented 2% of the Canadian adult population but accounted for approximately 17% of admissions to federal custody. Since then, those numbers have moved in the wrong direction, and significantly so: Recent data suggests that indigenous Canadians now account for 5% of the Canadian adult population but 30% of federally incarcerated individuals. It is just not right.

Black Canadians represent 3% of the Canadian adult population but 7% of federally incarcerated individuals. They too are overrepresented in terms of federally incarcerated individuals.

Data from the Correctional Service of Canada for 2007 to 2017 revealed that 39% of Black people and 20% of indigenous people incarcerated in a federal institution during those years were there for offences carrying a mandatory minimum penalty. Again, 39% of Black people and 20% of indigenous people were there because of mandatory minimums.

Further, during the same years, the proportion of indigenous offenders admitted to federal custody for an offence punishable by mandatory minimum penalties almost doubled, rising from 14% to 26%. Bill C-5 would reverse that trend and, in so doing, seek to make the criminal justice system fairer and more equitable for all.

When the Minister of Justice visited my riding of Halifax, he met with members of the African Nova Scotian community, including members of the African Nova Scotian Justice Institute, who, among many things, are committed to fighting racism in the criminal justice system. This group has been advocating impact of race and cultural assessments, something that originated in Nova Scotia, and I want to thank people like Robert Wright for their hard work and Brandon Rolle, who appeared at the justice committee on this legislation, for helping move this idea forward.

Our government is funding impact of race and cultural assessments across Canada by investing \$6.64 million over five years, followed by \$1.6 million of annual ongoing funding.

Alongside the changes contained in the bill, these are the kinds of important investments needed to make our justice system fairer for all.

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• (1705)

If mandatory minimum sentences are repealed, as provided for in Bill C-5, individuals may still be sentenced to harsh penalties. However, the courts will be able to consider the unique circumstances of each offence and determine the most appropriate sentence, rather than having their hands tied by mandatory minimum sentences, which, as we just heard, are filling up the jails with people who do not need to be there. This will help ensure that a person found guilty of an offence receives a sentence that is proportionate to their degree of responsibility and to the seriousness of the offence, while taking into account individualized factors.

Canada is not alone in recognizing that the increased and indiscriminate use of mandatory minimum penalties has proven to be a costly, ineffective and unfair approach to reducing crime, as others have also moved to reform. For instance, while the United States has historically made great use of MMPs, or mandatory minimum penalties, in the last decade many states, including Republican states, have moved toward reducing or eliminating mandatory sentences, with a particular focus on non-violent and drug-related charges.

The lead that the opposition followed in the Harper years from the Republicans in the United States has been proven not to work, and those Republicans are now changing their approach. Also, evidence shows that approaches other than imprisonment, such as community-based sanctions, reduce reoffending because they enable more effective reintegration into the community and reduce the stigma associated with criminal justice system involvement.

I do want to emphasize that those who commit serious crimes should face serious consequences. This is why, alongside Bill C-5, our government has brought forward Bill C-21, which will increase maximum penalties for firearms crimes. This would create the flexibility needed for our judges to impose appropriate sentences based on individual situations, and it is baffling to me that the Conservatives do not support it.

Bill C-5 would also increase the availability of conditional sentence orders, known as CSOs, without compromising public safety, so that sentencing courts could impose community-based sentences of less than two years when the offender does not pose a risk to public safety. A CSO is a sentence of incarceration of less than two years that is served in the community under strict conditions, such as curfew, house arrest, treatment and/or restrictions on possessing, owning or carrying a weapon.

The evidence is clear: Allowing offenders who do not pose a risk to public safety to serve their sentences under strict conditions in their community can be more effective at reducing future criminality. Offenders can keep a job, maintain ties with their families and maintain ties with their community. These are the measures that bring back flexibility of sentencing by allowing judges to help people, not just jail them.

For example, a judge can impose a CSO for an offender to serve their sentence at home and receive appropriate mental health and rehabilitation supports that we have heard again and again are so important to rehabilitation. This will increase access to alternatives to incarceration for low-risk offenders while also furthering the sentencing goals of denunciation and deterrence.

We have heard some claims from the other side that dangerous offenders will be able to get CSOs. That is simply not the case. CSOs will not be available for some offences prosecuted by way of indictment, including advocating genocide, torture, attempted murder, terrorism and criminal organization offences, for which the maximum term of imprisonment is 10 years or more. CSOs will only be available for sentences of under two years for offenders who do not pose a risk to public safety.

This is an important step in reorienting our criminal justice system so that it is both fairer and more effective, while ensuring public safety at the same time. All in all, Bill C-5 represents an important step in our government's efforts to eliminate systemic racism in Canadian society. This bill would also ensure that all Canadians have a safer and more equitable future.

The measures outlined in this bill go hand in hand with a slew of additional investments announced in the 2020 fall economic statement and the 2021 budget, which provide funding to promote co-operation on an indigenous justice strategy and engagement with indigenous communities and groups on creating legislation and activities that address systemic barriers in the criminal justice system.

Further, the government provides funding to community groups and programs that aid at-risk adolescents, give alternatives to criminal charges when possible, and help fight injustices in the judicial system that affect Black Canadians, indigenous peoples and other racialized communities.

I urge all of my colleagues in this chamber to support Bill C-5 to ensure a more equitable and fairer future for all Canadians. Regardless of their race, ethnicity or socio-economic backgrounds, Canadians from coast to coast deserve to feel safe and accepted in our society.

• (1710)

**Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague's speech. There is the perpetuation of a mischaracterization of this bill that is being done here, which is that somehow these are mandatory minimums that came from a previous Conservative government.

I want to quote someone. She was just named a Black Changemaker 2022. She is Marlene Jennings, a lawyer and former Liberal member of Parliament. She said:

It was a Liberal government that brought in mandatory minimum sentencing for firearm related crimes. There is a whole category of them where currently it is a minimum of one year. There is a second category of designated offences where currently it is four years. In committee...[we] attempted to increase the one year to two years and the four years to five years.

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That is Marlene Jennings. Does the hon. member suggest that she has it wrong? Will he acknowledge that the mandatory minimums that the Liberals are trying to eliminate are in fact Liberal mandatory minimums?

**Mr. Andy Fillmore:** Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague on one point, very much so, which is that there is a continuing perpetuation of a mis-framing of this bill. I could not agree more with that.

The existing sentencing policies that were enacted by the Conservatives focused on punishment through imprisonment. They disproportionately affect indigenous people as well as Black and marginalized Canadians. MMPs have also resulted in longer and more complex trials, consuming resources.

The bottom line in all of this is of course that MMPs do not work, particularly for these drug-related offences and others.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Madam Speaker, removing mandatory minimums, as is included in this bill, instead of decriminalizing personal possession of substances creates a system through which people struggling with substance misuse will still end up in the criminal justice system instead of in the health care system, where they can get the support they need.

Why is the government only taking a half step with this bill and refusing to treat this toxic drug supply crisis like the emergency it is?

**Mr. Andy Fillmore:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question very much. Of course, the great success that the federal government has had with the Province of British Columbia in addressing the legality and illegality of certain drugs is very promising. We plan to work closely with the other provinces to ensure that we can roll that out across the country appropriately, within the bounds of our constitutional jurisdiction, with provinces, as far as they are willing.

What is important about this bill is that not only would it allow the use of CSOs for drug-related offences, but it is also buttressed by important announcements in the fall economic statement and budget 2021 for wraparound services for people who are experiencing these hardships in their lives.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I certainly agree with the point that my hon. colleague from Halifax has made. There have been a number of allegations about Bill C-5 that I find disappointing, because the evidence is quite clear. As well, some of the evidence has not been raised by government members, which surprises me. Some of the evidence is about the cost to provinces, since the effect of mandatory minimums is to overcrowd prisons and to increase the demands on provincial governments to pay for the incarceration of prisoners who might have been able to have punishments that fitted the crime and not be incarcerated for as long.

I wonder if my hon. friend, the parliamentary secretary, has any comments on the costs to the provinces of imposing mandatory minimums.

• (1715)

**Mr. Andy Fillmore:** Madam Speaker, I made a very light touch in my previous answer on the resource intensity of these MMPs and

the tough-on-crime stance that the Conservative government enacted into law prior to this government.

There is no question that provincial governments can expend the resources of their taxpayers in more important and more effective ways to make society more equitable and improve access to all kinds of societal supports, rather than putting people behind bars and depriving them of those very supports that they need so dearly.

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[*Translation*]

**MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE**

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill C-8, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update tabled in Parliament on December 14, 2021 and other measures.

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[*English*]

**CRIMINAL CODE**

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on the Liberals' do-no-time, soft-on-crime bill, Bill C-5. This do-no-time, soft-on-crime Liberal bill eliminates mandatory jail time for serious firearms-related offences and serious drug offences, and significantly expands conditional sentencing orders, otherwise known as house arrests, for an array of violent and other serious offences.

Yesterday in the House, the Minister of Justice, in an effort to defend this soft-on-crime bill, said something truly remarkable. He said not to worry about it, because Bill C-5 targets "situations where public security and public safety are not at risk." Really? Perhaps the minister should read his own bill because if he did, he would learn that Bill C-5 eliminates mandatory jail time for such firearms offences as robbery with a firearm, weapons trafficking, extortion with a firearm, using a firearm with the intent to injure and using a firearm in the commission of a crime, among other serious firearms offences. However, the Minister of Justice says that Bill C-5 targets "situations where public security and public safety are not at risk." Is he kidding?

I think Canadians would be absolutely shocked if they knew that the Minister of Justice thought that robbery with a firearm, using a firearm in the commission of an offence and discharging a firearm with the intent to injure constitute crimes in which public security and public safety are not an issue. We literally cannot make this stuff up, yet there he was in this place asserting that with a straight face.

It goes on. As I noted, this bill significantly expands house arrests. With the passage of Bill C-5, criminals convicted of such offences as kidnapping a minor, arson for a fraudulent purpose, assault with a weapon, impaired driving causing death and sexual assault would be able to serve their sentences at home, instead of behind bars where they belong. There we have it. These are offences such as sexual assault, kidnapping a minor and arson for a fraudulent purpose, but the minister says that Bill C-5 targets “situations where public security and public safety are not at risk.” As I said, we cannot make this stuff up.

I will tell members who disagree with the minister: Many of the key witnesses who came to the justice committee, representatives of law enforcement, victims' advocates and community leaders. They have a very different take on the impact that Bill C-5 is going to have.

Take the crime of sexual assault. Jennifer Dunn, of the London Abused Women's Centre, came before the committee and said now that perpetrators of sexual assault would be able to serve their sentences at home, the victims of sexual assault, particularly women, were going to be put at even greater risk because they were going to be stuck in the same communities, often, as the perpetrators. No kidding. This is a news flash to the minister.

Then there is André Gélinas, a retired detective sergeant from the Montreal police service who characterized Bill C-5 as “a race to the bottom”.

● (1720)

He went on to say:

It is paradoxical and totally dichotomous to think that abolishing mandatory minimum sentences that apply to criminal offences involving firearms will have a beneficial effect on our communities.

Staff Sergeant Michael Rowe appeared before the committee representing the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. With respect to the mandatory jail times involving serious firearms offences that Bill C-5 seeks to repeal, he said that these specific mandatory jail times “hold significant value when addressing public safety and gang-related violence”.

Anie Samson, a former Montreal municipal councillor and mayor of a borough in the most multicultural part of Montreal, which has unfortunately been ravaged by serious gun and gang violence, said that Bill C-5, in eliminating mandatory jail time for serious firearms offences, “exacerbates impunity”.

There we have it. Contrary to the Minister of Justice's ridiculous assertion, key witnesses before the justice committee said very clearly that Bill C-5 would in fact undermine public security, undermine public safety and put victims at risk, particularly victims of such crimes as sexual assault.

### *Government Orders*

Do members know who would also be hurt and put at risk, contrary to the talking points of the Liberals? It would be persons struggling with addictions and vulnerable Canadians. The Minister of Justice, at second reading, spoke about the fact that we have an opioid crisis in Canada, and he is quite right. He spoke about the need, in order to address that crisis, to implement measures around education, treatment and rehabilitation. He would not find argument on this side of the House on that point.

However, Bill C-5 would do none of those things. What Bill C-5 would do is eliminate mandatory jail time for the very people, the very criminals, who are profiting from putting poison on our streets that is killing 20 Canadians a day and 7,000 Canadians a year in the opioid crisis. Those are the people who are going to benefit from Bill C-5, because Bill C-5 would eliminate mandatory jail time for producers and pushers of schedule 1 and schedule 2 drugs under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. These are drugs such as fentanyl and crystal meth.

I challenge the Minister of Justice to explain how it is that simply eliminating mandatory jail time for the producers and pushers of these killer drugs would make anyone safer. It simply would not. This bill really does speak to the priorities of the Liberal government or, I would submit, the misplaced priorities of the government. The government's priority is to put criminals first, public security, public safety and the rights of victims be damned.

This is a reckless and dangerous bill that would undermine safety in our communities, put victims last and put vulnerable Canadians at risk. That is why we on the Conservative side of the House will continue to fight this bill every step of the way.

● (1725)

**Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, while I disagree with my hon. colleague on his framing of the bill, I always appreciate the very well-delivered speeches he gives.

The member selectively quoted Jennifer Dunn in her appearance before the committee, talking about conditional sentencing. I also read what Jennifer Dunn said at committee, which is that, “Women are not protected by the law unless all mandatory minimum penalties are considered.”

Basically, she seems to be arguing that all mandatory minimums should be removed from the Criminal Code. Does the hon. member believe that really buttresses the case that he is making in his speech?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, I do not know how we are going to make anyone safe by eliminating mandatory jail time for serious firearms and drug-related offences.

*Private Members' Business*

With respect to conditional sentencing, which was the main purpose of her testimony, she noted that it is going to have a very negative impact on women because those predators are going to be serving time in the victims' communities. On top of that, it is often difficult to supervise these people, which again is putting vulnerable people at risk.

Very simply put, this bill from start to finish is a badly drafted bill that gets it precisely backwards. It is why we are going to continue to fight it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank our colleague for his speech. He made a lot of references to safety. I do not think anyone in the House doubts the importance of safety. Montreal is going through some tough times these days.

Does my colleague really believe that a person with mental health issues or a substance abuse problem is a safety threat?

[English]

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, with respect to my colleague, that is not what I said. What I said is that when it comes to addressing those who are struggling with addictions, we need to look at alternatives. We need to support treatment and rehabilitation efforts. Incarceration should be a last resort, and indeed there is a directive issued by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada not to prosecute in case of simple possession.

Where this bill is wrong, however, is that it would eliminate mandatory jail time not for simple possession, for which there is no mandatory jail time, but for the producers and pushers of the very drugs that are hurting those who are suffering and struggling with addiction. That is the problem with Bill C-5.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, if we are to address systemic racism in our justice system and the overincarceration of indigenous peoples, racialized people and Canadians living in poverty, then we need to do more than the timid measures put forward by the Liberals in this bill. Can the member share some ideas of how this bill can be improved so it is less timid and actually serves to address the systemic racism we see in Canada?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Madam Speaker, respectfully, my position regarding this bill is that it needs to be scrapped. It needs to be defeated and the government needs to go back to the drawing board.

On the issue of systemic racism and the impacts the criminal justice system has on marginalized Canadians, yes, it is an issue that needs to be addressed. One of the things that was noted at committee is that many of the victims, in fact a disproportionate number of victims, also come from racialized and vulnerable communities. What we need to make a priority is putting victims first, and this bill puts victims last and criminals first.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

● (1730)

[English]

**CRIMINAL CODE**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-206, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (disclosure of information by jurors), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** There being no motions at report stage on this bill, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC)** moved that the bill be concurred in.

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[English]

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** I request that it be adopted on division.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I declare the motion carried on division. When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Michael Cooper** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise to speak to Bill S-206 at third reading stage. It is an act to amend the Criminal Code relating to section 649, otherwise known as the jury secrecy rule. This bill, which I was proud to sponsor in the House of Commons, is a straightforward piece of legislation that would carve out a narrow exception to the jury secrecy rule.

As it currently stands, former jurors are unable to disclose any aspect of their jury service with anyone for life, even a medical professional bound by confidentiality. This bill addresses that by carving out an exception whereby former jurors who are suffering from mental health issues arising from their jury service could disclose all aspects of that service with a medical professional bound by confidentiality.

This bill is a needed piece of legislation that would go a long way to supporting juror mental health, and I will get into the substance of that momentarily. I am very pleased that this bill has been reported back to the House from the justice committee unamended and with unanimous support. This bill has already passed the House unanimously at second reading stage.

A bill that I introduced in the 42nd Parliament, Bill C-417, a bill that is substantively the same as this bill, passed the House at all legislative stages but did not progress due to the call of the 2019 election. Thanks to the leadership of Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu, who introduced this bill in the Senate, and Senator Lucie Moncion, a former juror who suffered from mental health issues arising from her jury service, we have seen this bill clear the other place, again with unanimous support.

I speak to the unanimity around this bill because it really does underscore that this is a common-sense fix. It is not often that we can find unanimous support across the board from all parliamentarians and all stakeholders involved, including former jurors, mental health professionals and lawyers, among others.

This bill is a product of the study the justice committee undertook on juror supports, the first parliamentary study of its kind. It was initiated by the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I had the privilege of serving on the justice committee during the study and continue to serve on that committee. I can tell members that while there are many people I can thank for leading the bill to where it is today in being on the cusp of passing into law, this bill would not have happened but for the jurors who came before the justice committee. These former jurors came to our committee and talked about the impact the jury service had on them.

Jury service is something that I think sometimes we do not know enough about, unless we are summoned to serve on a jury or know someone who has been. Jury service can be stressful. Jurors can be exposed to horrific evidence, and it can have an impact on their mental health.

To provide just a bit of context in terms of the experiences of former jurors who conveyed their stories before the justice committee, I want to take a moment to read into the record some of the testimony we heard four and a half years ago.

• (1735)

Mark Farrant, a jury foreman in a gruesome murder trial, said:

In court as a juror, I took all the evidence in silently, as was my role. As jurors, we ingest the evidence and the facts. We do not interact with it. We are not afforded an opportunity to look away or raise our hands and say to the courtroom, "Turn that off; I've had enough."

Tina Daenzer, who served as juror number one in the gruesome Paul Bernardo trial, said, "Imagine watching young girls being raped and tortured over and over again. You couldn't close your eyes and you couldn't look away because your duty was to watch the evidence."

Patrick Fleming, who served on a jury involving a 10-month gruesome murder trial, spoke about jury service and the impact it had on his life. He said:

When my civic duty was done and I was able to go home to my family and return to my "normal" life, I pulled into my driveway and expected feelings of relief to wash over me, but something was different. I did not feel at my place of peace. Something was not right.

He went on to say:

We need assistance getting back to our "normal" life. We are civilians who did not choose this path for ourselves nor are we trained to deal with this type of situation. Being a juror is a monumental job that has had a major impact on my life.

### *Private Members' Business*

In the course of our study, we heard about the jury secrecy rule and the degree to which it can impede jurors getting the full mental health supports they need. In that regard, there are at least two impediments.

The first is that the deliberation process is often the most stressful aspect of jury service. To not be able to talk about what is often the most stressful aspect of jury service is clearly an impediment to getting the help that a juror suffering from mental health issues requires. The second issue, which is more general in nature, is that it can impact the ability of former jurors to have full and frank discussions with mental health and other medical professionals because there is a lack of understanding about what the boundaries are regarding what can be talked about in light of the jury secrecy rule. We even heard that some medical professionals are reluctant to take on former jurors as clients as a result.

That is where this bill comes in. It provides clarity in the law and ensures that former jurors can have those full and frank discussions in a strictly confidential context. These full and frank discussions are often so vital to getting better in the face of mental health issues. This legislation is not novel. It may be new to Canada, but it has been successfully implemented in the Australian state of Victoria, where it has worked very well.

This issue and the way this bill has moved forward speak to Parliament working at its best. We had a groundbreaking study on juror supports in which an issue was identified regarding jurors getting mental health supports, and a solution was identified.

• (1740)

Rather than letting the unanimous report sit on the shelf and collect dust, I took it upon myself to introduce a bill, Bill C-417, a few months after the release of that report. However, at all stages, up until today, I received full support and collaboration from all members on all sides, including the member for Mount Royal, who was the chair of the justice committee during the study, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and the former member for Victoria, who is the minister of aboriginal affairs today in the Government of British Columbia, among many others, all of whom recognized that this was an issue and that we needed to work together to implement a key common-sense recommendation that is small but will have a meaningful impact.

This bill is very close to crossing the finish line, and I hope it will cross the finish line today so that we can send it to the Governor General. It is a step forward, but a lot more work needs to be done around juror mental health. When we think about it, in a criminal trial, the lawyers, the Crown, the defence, the presiding judge and court workers all have access to various mental health programs and supports, but guess who often do not. It is the men and women who do not have a choice to be there. They are there because they have been summoned. They are performing their civic duty, and often they have nothing in the way of mental health support programs.

*Private Members' Business*

Fortunately, there has been some movement. Four provinces now have juror support programs, but they are not robust enough. In short, jurors in those four provinces have access to up to four counselling sessions free of charge. Often that is about it, and those measures were only implemented in the last number of years. I recognize the member for Ottawa Centre because when he was the minister of justice, he heard Mark Farrant and took it upon himself to see that the Province of Ontario developed a juror support program. However, there is more work to do because in six provinces there are essentially no supports and we need to do better.

What I hope is that after we pass this bill, the government will take seriously the implementation of another key recommendation of the report on juror supports: to work with the provinces to address the patchwork in the lack of supports and the inadequacy of supports, and provide, among other things, one-time funding so that we can have the supports that jurors deserve.

Jurors play an integral role in the administration of justice. We owe this to them. They should not have to suffer from mental health issues, unable to get help. This bill is a step in the direction of helping former jurors. I say very simply that it is a bill that has been studied and debated exhaustively. We all know the issue and we know what needs to be done. Let us get this bill passed and sent to the Governor General today to be brought into law.

• (1745)

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, given the member was involved in the initial study that was done by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, perhaps he could outline some of the other recommendations that were part of the report on juror support.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, one of the key recommendations was to see that former jurors who are suffering from mental health issues can access as many counselling sessions as required.

Another important component was to see that former jurors have information packages so they have a better idea of what jury service entails, because a big stressor is that of the unknown. Many jurors, until they are summoned, have very little experience with the criminal justice system, what a trial looks like and what impacts a trial could have. That is a very straightforward recommendation that all provinces can work toward offering in the way of information.

Another recommendation that I think is key is seeing that there is training, not of jurors, but of judges and other actors in the justice system to recognize and better understand some of the stressors that jurors face and to work to help alleviate those in the course of a trial as a result of that greater awareness.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his very impassioned speech and his advocacy on this issue continuously throughout many Parliaments.

I could not agree more. We need to get this out the door for sure so that we can see jurors across this country supported in a meaningful way.

I want him to expand on one of the things he touched on. This is a civic duty. That is what jurors are doing, yet we are leaving them in this country at this point with a great amount of suffering. It is like being wounded while serving one's country.

Could he talk about how important it is to recognize that and make sure that is not the legacy we leave?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, the member for North Island—Powell River is absolutely right. Jury service is a mandatory form of civic duty. As Mark Farrant notes, it is the last form of mandatory civic duty since the abolition of conscription.

The former jurors that we heard from I think reflect most former jurors across Canada. They are proud of their jury service. They also believe that they should not suffer from mental health issues, unable to get help, because they performed their civic duty. Jurors undertake work integral to the administration of justice in Canada at a considerable personal cost. We have to recognize that and we have to do more to support them.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague said, jury service is mandatory, but people are not always ready to hear all the horrific details in the testimony.

I find it interesting that former jurors could also benefit from assistance and support in recognition of all that they saw and experienced. That was another proposal.

We are all well aware of the long-term negative effects that PTSD can have on jurors. That is why it is important that my colleague's bill be retroactive to help those who have already gone through this kind of experience.

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, it would be retroactive in the sense that former jurors would be able to disclose all aspects of their jury service with a medical professional even if the trial concluded years ago.

One thing I do want to add is that some of the former jurors who did appear before our committee, Mark Farrant and Tina Daenzer, who are here in Ottawa, have done incredible work to support jurors through the Canadian Juries Commission. They have taken an incredible amount of suffering and difficulty and have worked to bring greater awareness around some of the issues facing jurors. They are to be commended for their leadership.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill S-206, an act to amend the Criminal Code relating to disclosure of information by jurors.

*Private Members' Business*

We heard quite eloquently from the member for St. Albert—Edmonton of the need for and importance of the bill. I want to thank him again for his leadership, determination and co-operation with all members in this House and the Senate in getting the bill to this point.

I will start by acknowledging the two people whom the member spoke about as being instrumental. I think they would argue that they are just the voices that raised these issues and that there are many people who have served as jurors across this country who are the motivation behind the work they are doing. Those two people are Mark Farrant and Tina Daenzer. I am happy to acknowledge that both of them are with us in the House. I want to thank them personally for joining us here today and for their advocacy over the years. They both are part of the Canadian Juries Commission, an organization that is very much focused on creating and promoting awareness around jury duty, support for jurors and, of course, educating all of us not only at the federal level in this House and in the Senate, but also in the provincial and territorial legislative assemblies across the country.

As the member for St. Albert—Edmonton mentioned, I have had the opportunity to work on this important issue from the perspective of the provinces in terms of ensuring there are mental health supports for jurors. It is an interesting story as to how I came to work on this, and it is because I met Mark Farrant.

The first time I saw Mr. Farrant, it was not in person. As many of us do after a full day at the legislative assembly, I was watching the national news when I saw a story about a juror who had suffered significant mental health challenges, described as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, as a result of being part of a fairly gruesome and horrific murder trial. That person was Mr. Farrant, who was brave enough to speak on television about his trials and tribulations.

We have a special responsibility by virtue of the fact that we are elected and have some impact on the things that we see and hear in our society. I was quite taken aback by his story. At the time, I was not just a member of provincial Parliament, but I was also the attorney general of the province, and I was watching on TV this person describing his suffering. He was talking about how the justice system, as much as it had asked of him as a citizen of this country to participate in a critical element of our justice system, was not there to give him the support that he needed to continue on with his life.

I personally felt guilty, because I was not even aware at the time that this issue existed. As a result of that, we started to work on the issue. I had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Farrant who, of course, in his very calm, persuasive manner, was able to educate me and officials of the ministry of the attorney general as to the impact on jurors when they go through trials that are gruesome and horrific, and when they are given evidence of that nature.

By working together, we were able to introduce in a very short period of time a support program for jurors, albeit limited in scope. I am confident there is more work to be done, as was stated earlier. However, it is a program that jurors can access for mental health support and, importantly, have that information provided ahead of time. I remember reviewing some of the draft documents that were being created to hand over to jurors and, of course, working with

the judiciary and other court officials, and providing them training so that they would be able to speak with jurors in advance of trials in order to make them aware.

• (1755)

It is interesting for me to come a bit full circle now that I am elected as a member of Parliament. As the federal jurisdiction, we are responsible for the Criminal Code. There actually is a barrier in our Criminal Code that prevents, by law, our jurors from seeking medical help if they need it by virtue of the fact that section 649 of the Criminal Code requires non-disclosure of information that jurors have received.

We encourage people, if they need mental health supports, to go see a mental health care professional. That requires one to share information and to be able to speak of things that one is feeling and facing. This particular rule that exists in our Criminal Code prevents this. We are putting a juror in a position of actually breaking the law, because they are to keep secret the information they have seen, even though they are in front of a health care professional.

The solution that is presented before us is part of Bill S-206. It is something that I fully support and will be voting in favour of. It creates an exception to the jury secrecy rule to allow jurors, in a very limited, narrow scope, to seek health support so that they can look after their own personal health, especially their mental health.

In my view, there is no reason why all members of the House would not support the bill to pass it into law as soon as possible. As we heard from the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, other members from all parties have worked on this issue. I want to also acknowledge the engagement and participation of the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. Of course, there is the work that has been done in the Senate by Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu. All of this has resulted in our being on the cusp of passing this bill into law, so that we can get into the elements of supports that are needed by our jurors. I would encourage all members to support this bill, so that it can be passed into law.

In my limited time, I also want to mention the great resource we have in the Canadian Juries Commission. It has been doing some incredible work in creating awareness around the kind of supports that jurors need. I think we need to spend more time with it.

I understand that, in fact, some work has been done. The Department of Justice, under the leadership of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, has partnered with the Canadian Juries Commission to do some pilot projects in British Columbia. These are very good steps, because the results from those pilots can be applicable across the country, but also recognize and appreciate our jurors.

Most recently, many members will remember, through the initiative of the Canadian Juries Commission, we had a week-long appreciation of jurors, to understand the work they do and their contributions to our justice system, which is the essence of our democratic system.

*Private Members' Business*

That is the work we have to do. I very much look forward to working with all members on this important issue, but particularly with the Canadian Juries Commission. Hopefully, we will start by passing this bill into law.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill S-206, which is before the House for a fourth time, if we count the three previous versions of the bill introduced in previous Parliaments. Regardless, the bill we are studying today is still the same bill.

Bill S-206 essentially proposes a change to the existing rules regarding the confidentiality of deliberations between members of a jury who have to decide the fate of an accused person. The jury secrecy rule is set out in section 649 of the Criminal Code and is also called “Lord Mansfield's rule”. It is a cornerstone of common law and the British criminal justice system.

This rule is anything but trivial. The jury is the trier of fact. The judge presiding over a trial is the trier of law. The judge adjudicates matters of law that arise over the course of the trial and gives the necessary advice to inform and guide the jury regarding these matters. That said, at the end of the day, as intended by the legislator, it is the members of the jury who decide whether the accused is guilty or innocent.

The role of jurors is therefore vitally important to the judicial process. When they deliberate, they need to feel completely free to say what they think out loud without worrying about being publicly quoted later as having put forward a certain idea or opinion. Obviously, jurors will often disagree with one another when they first begin their deliberations, but they will work together to consider all the facts entered into evidence during the trial, which may have gone on for many weeks in some cases.

At that point, the success of their work will basically depend on the flow of their debate and how comfortable they feel talking freely and unreservedly among themselves. I am thinking of the ability to share the uninhibited, unfiltered thoughts that come into our minds as we think about what we are going to say. The legislator grants the jury a type of legal status—a partial, temporary status—that lasts only as long as the trial. The jury will then speak with one voice and render a unanimous verdict, like a single person who speaks after carefully considering and weighing all aspects of an issue.

It is therefore easy to see that a sound decision requires absolute confidence in the confidentiality of their deliberations, just as every one of us refuses to compromise the integrity and inviolability of our thoughts. Anyone who, rightly or wrongly, believes someone else is probing their thoughts will self-censor and be unable to think freely. That is anathema to a healthy thought process and wise deliberation.

Section 649 of the Criminal Code states that it is an offence for a jury member or anyone assisting them to disclose “any information relating to the proceedings of the jury, when it was absent from the courtroom that was not subsequently disclosed in open court”.

In this regard, the Supreme Court has already ruled as follows in *R. v. Pan* and *R. v. Sawyer* in 2001:

The common law rule, in combination with s. 649 of the *Code*, helps to ensure that jurors feel comfortable freely expressing their views in the jury room and that jurors who hold minority viewpoints do not feel pressured to retreat from their opinions because of possible negative repercussions associated with the disclosure of their positions.

We therefore understand that this is the rule that ensures sound, reasonable decisions. That said, jury duty is not always easy.

Sometimes, the facts and evidence of a criminal case can be so intense that they have a significant impact on the jury members hearing the case. Unfortunately, violence and horror can feature prominently in the crimes a person is accused of.

• (1805)

Furthermore, jury deliberations can often be very emotional. It is extremely stressful to stand alone against 11 other jurors and defend a point of view that none of them agree with. Add to that the often heavy consequences that the jury's decision will have for the accused, and I have no difficulty imagining that the situation can become untenable.

In some cases, jury members can be traumatized to such an extent that they have to consult a health professional to deal with it. Some experiences have drastically transformed the lives of jurors left to cope with their trauma alone. These people did not choose to be jurors; they were chosen, and they had a legal obligation to fulfil that duty. They clearly deserve our gratitude and our support. As things stand now, it is more difficult for them to receive care and adequate treatment for what they are suffering, as they cannot speak freely about their trauma without contravening section 649 of the Criminal Code.

Ensuring access to adequate and efficient health services for those who generously contributed to the justice system is obviously paramount. It is our responsibility. It is only common sense that we concur with what is fair and obvious.

Bill S-206 proposes to allow members of a jury to be exempt from this rule of confidentiality if they require professional health services for medical or psychiatric treatment, therapy or counselling provided after the trial.

This bill asks us to examine a proposed new paragraph (c) under section 649 of the Criminal Code, adding new exceptions to those already established in paragraphs (a) and (b) to allow for evidence to be given in obstruction of justice cases. The proposed paragraph (c) adds an exemption from the confidentiality obligation for the purposes of:

(c) any medical or psychiatric treatment or any therapy or counselling that a person referred to in subsection (1) receives from a health care professional after the completion of the trial in relation to health issues arising out of or related to the person's service at the trial as a juror or as a person who provided support services to a juror.

The proposed subsection 649(3) also adds that the health care professional who provides any medical or psychiatric treatment or any therapy or counselling must be entitled to do so under the laws of a province.

This is a small loophole in the absolutely essential integrity of the confidentiality of jury deliberations. However, the loophole is closed by the confidentiality obligation in the rules of ethical conduct that professional associations impose on their members.

The House must now weigh the benefits to the justice system of keeping jury deliberations confidential against the benefits to jury members of having more accessible and certainly more effective consultation services between each other and, if applicable, their health professionals.

These decent individuals already do not receive the compensation and consideration they deserve in light of their valuable contribution to the justice system. They are at the heart of some legal as well as moral debates for which they were never prepared. They are calling for a bit of support and recognition, which seems like the bare minimum. As I said, they deserve our respect, our recognition and better working conditions. One day, we will probably have to think about what more we can do to acknowledge their true value.

Under the circumstances, the Bloc Québécois will be voting in favour of this bill.

• (1810)

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I just want to say a deep thanks to the member for St. Albert—Edmonton for his advocacy on this very important issue. I want to recognize the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford from the NDP caucus, who has worked very hard as well with this member, and, of course, I want to thank Murray Rankin, a former member of the House who is now a minister in British Columbia for the NDP, for his work on it. I also have to recognize Senator Boisvenu for getting it to the House again.

Quite frankly, though, I am tired of debating this. I want to see this become law. I want to see this move forward because we need the action to happen. I thank all the people who have brought it forward. I certainly hope today that people do not take up all the time, so that we can see this bill actually do what I want it to do, which is collapse and get into the system so we can see the results.

This bill would amend section 649 of the Criminal Code to allow jurors to speak to mental health professionals about their experience as jurors. We know that all the parties in this place unanimously support it and have done it multiple times. Now we need to see the action taken.

We know that people who sit in those duties do their civic duty and sometimes they have to hear tremendously painful stories that leave them wracked with a lot of difficult feelings. Currently, we know that the folks in this country who serve our country and our communities by doing jury duty are left alone to deal with this. They have stress. They have anxiety. We have heard stories of post-traumatic stress disorder. We know that they are receiving a lot of harm.

### *Private Members' Business*

Their job is to witness sometimes very horrendous things that have happened in our communities. They have to witness things that most of us, hopefully, will never have to witness. Therefore, it is important that we serve them by making sure that, when they do their civic duty, they are given the supports they need.

We know right now that secrecy is important. There is an element of secrecy that we need to have. It preserves the process and it keeps jurors from being harassed because they are not put in a position where they are forced to tell the story of what happened, but that secrecy should not go into the field of mental health. That needs to stop. When people are traumatized, they need to receive help so they can process those very difficult things.

We know that juror silence is creating a pattern of serious mental health challenges that sometimes result in life-long consequences. In fact, I perceive it as them being punished for doing their civic duty. Mark Farrant, the founder and CEO of Canadian Juries Commission, said very clearly, "Jury duty is a civic duty, but not a duty to suffer psychologically".

That is all I am going to say on this. I hope that other members in this House will take the leadership to speak quickly to this so we can see it collapse. We need to get it into the legal framework so jurors in this country are respected and treated better by being able to access services.

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to participate in the third reading debate on Senate Bill S-206. This bill would amend section 649 of the Criminal Code to add an exception for the offence of disclosure of jury proceedings to enable jurors to disclose information in the course of receiving mental health treatment.

Our government recognizes the importance of supporting jurors in their duties and is committed to working with the provinces and territories to improve support measures for jurors and to facilitate the sharing of best practices between jurisdictions. I want to thank the members of all parties on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for studying and passing this important bill collaboratively, and ensuring that we could debate it today.

There could be significant mental health and other stresses associated with jury duty, and the toll that criminal trials could take on jurors is something that we cannot ignore. Thanks to former jurors who have come forward and advocated for improved juror supports, we have a greater appreciation of the challenges jurors face and the intense personal and mental health impacts that could follow an individual after their jury duty has ended.

*Private Members' Business*

Notably, over the years we have benefited from the testimony and lived experiences of former Ontario juror Mark Farrant, who is also the founder and CEO of the Canadian Juries Commission, a national not-for-profit organization representing Canadians on jury duty and in coroner's inquests. I am very pleased to have learned that the Department of Justice recently provided funding to the Canadian Juries Commission for a jury-related project.

The project is with respect to the Canadian Juries Commission's creation of two mental health training and support programs for Canadians performing jury duty and piloting them exclusively in British Columbia. Our government agrees that meaningful support to jurors who play an essential role in the Canadian justice system is needed to ensure that they can effectively perform this important civic duty and limit negative consequences.

The standing committee's May 2018 report entitled "Improving Support for Jurors in Canada" documented that many former jurors described their jury duty experience as positive. However, the report also included testimony from jurors who served on difficult and disturbing criminal cases, and who have encountered mental health distress, suffering and in some instances even reported post-traumatic stress disorder following their service.

The committee's recommendation 4 in its report was "That the Government of Canada amend section 649 of the Criminal Code so that jurors are permitted to discuss jury deliberations with designated mental health professionals once the trial is over."

Bill S-206 proposes an amendment that would address this recommendation and concerns over the offence in section 649 providing an obstacle to jurors seeking mental health support following the completion of a trial. The committee's recommendations were unanimously supported. I certainly support the recommendation and I support this bill.

The Criminal Code sets out the procedural rules regulating jury trials and jury selection, as well as the offence of disclosing information relating to jury proceedings in section 649. This offence applies to every juror and every person that provides technical, personal, interpretative or other support services to a juror with a physical disability.

There are existing exceptions under section 649 which permit disclosure in respect of an investigation or prosecution of a charge of obstruction of justice in relation to a juror, under subsection 139(2) of the Criminal Code. However, the general rule is that a juror cannot discuss anything that has to do with the deliberations of the jury with anyone apart from the other members of that same jury.

The substance of this legislation is short and straightforward, and I believe it is targeting an important issue deserving of our attention. Indeed, when we situate the bill in the present context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we can all understand the importance of supporting the well-being and mental health of Canadians, particularly those who are participants in the justice system.

We know that the pandemic has affected the mental health of Canadians. A Statistics Canada survey on COVID-19 and mental health in September 2021 indicated that one in four Canadians, or 25%, age 18 and older screened positive for symptoms of depres-

sion, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder in the spring of 2021, up from one in five, or 21%, in the fall of 2020, a year earlier.

• (1815)

A more recent study in January 2022 from the Angus Reid Institute found that the population is largely fatigued, frustrated and anxious, with one in three Canadians, or 36%, saying that they are struggling with their mental health. According to this study, this represents an increase from the one-quarter who responded in November 2021, prior to omicron becoming the dominant COVID-19 variant in Canada.

Canadians across the country who are experiencing mental health difficulties are the very same population that is called upon for jury duty by way of provincial and territorial legislative processes governing the criteria with respect to who may serve and be summoned as a juror. I am very pleased that the government committed to supporting Canadians and their mental health through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, such as through its record of investing millions in the mental health and distress centres that exist across the country. If serving on a jury creates the need for mental health supports, then there should not be barriers for those who must access them.

Encouraging citizens to perform their civic duty and supporting former jurors is one way in which we can ensure our justice system remains strong and fair. The Canadian Juries Commission conducted a national opinion survey in June 2020, which identified that only 18% of Canadians indicated their willingness to participate in jury duty. One can imagine that the criminal justice system would fare better in attracting jurors if individuals summoned for jury duty or who serve on a jury know that despite how difficult that service might be, they will not be impeded in accessing the support that they need to remedy any potential mental health impacts that they may face.

I call on all members to support Bill S-206, because it would allow former jurors to be freer in expressing their thoughts and feelings to a health care professional on matters that may have deeply disturbed or upset them or caused significant stress during their service as a juror. It is a remarkable aspect of our justice system that jurors across the country and in countless courtrooms meet the challenges of jury duty, and it only makes sense that they would be able to receive the support that they need to return to their lives afterward.

• (1820)

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill S-206, an act to amend the Criminal Code on disclosure of information by jurors.

Bill S-206 proposes an amendment that seeks to help jurors who face mental health challenges flowing from fulfilling their civic duty and after completion of a jury trial. It proposes to do so by adding an exception to the offence of disclosure of jury proceedings under section 649 of the Criminal Code.

The substance of this legislation is short and straightforward and I believe is targeting an important issue deserving of our attention. Indeed, when we situate the bill in the present context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we can all understand the importance of supporting the well-being and mental health of Canadians, and particularly those who participate in the justice system.

We know the pandemic has affected the mental health of Canadians. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, almost half of all Canadians have reported that their mental health has worsened since the beginning of the pandemic. A Statistics Canada survey on COVID-19 and mental health in September 2021 indicated that one in four Canadians, or 25%, age 18 and older screened positive for symptoms of depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder in the spring of 2021, up from one in five, or 21%, in the fall of 2020.

A more recent study in January 2022, from the Angus Reid Institute, found that the population is largely fatigued, frustrated and anxious, with one in three Canadians, or 36%, stating they are struggling with their mental health. According to this study, this represents an increase from the one-quarter who responded in November 2021, prior to omicron becoming the dominant COVID-19 variant in Canada.

Canadians across the country who are experiencing mental health difficulties are the very same population called upon for jury duty by way of provincial and territorial legislative processes governing the criteria with respect to who may serve and be summoned as a juror. I am very pleased that the government is committed to supporting Canadians and their mental health through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, such as through its record of investing millions into mental health and distress centres.

Thanks to the previous work undertaken by the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to study counselling and mental health supports for jurors, we have a better understanding of the experience of Canadians who serve on juries and the potentially long-lasting impacts of such service. The committee's May 2018 report entitled "Improving Support for Jurors in Canada" documented that many former jurors described their jury duty experience as positive. However, the report also includes testimony from jurors who served on difficult and unfortunately disturbing criminal cases ended up encountering much mental health distress and suffering, and in some instances even reported post-traumatic stress disorder following their service. It is conceivable that jury duty during any pandemic could give rise to additional stresses and strains on an individual, for example, concerns over their safety and physical-distancing requirements being respected at all times.

I believe that if serving on a jury creates a need for mental health supports, then there should not be barriers for those who must access them. Bill S-206 proposes to amend section 649 of the Criminal Code by adding a narrow exception to the offence prohibiting

### *Private Members' Business*

jurors from disclosing information otherwise disclosed in open court to enable them to share this information in the course of receiving mental health treatment from a health care professional.

While the purpose of section 649 of the Criminal Code is to protect the integrity of the jury deliberation process, the offence has been identified as posing a barrier for jurors in accessing mental health supports by former jurors and in the report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. The amendment proposed in Bill S-206 would address recommendation 4 of the report of the standing committee, which proposes that there may be a more lenient secrecy rule for jury deliberations. The committee's recommendations were unanimously supported.

I certainly support the recommendation and I support this bill. For instance, former Bill C-417 in 2019 unanimously passed in the House of Commons following the adoption of amendments by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

● (1825)

I call on all members to support Bill S-206 because it would allow former jurors to be freer in expressing their thoughts and feelings to a health care professional on matters that may have deeply disturbed or upset them or caused significant stress during their service as a juror.

It is a remarkable aspect of our justice system that jurors across the country and in countless courtrooms meet the challenges of jury duty, and so it only makes sense that they would be able to receive the support they need to return to their lives afterward. I am pleased that the government expressed its support for former Bill C-417 and is now in support of Bill S-206. The government has introduced, and Parliament has enacted, a number of changes to improve the jury regime in the Criminal Code.

For example, the Government of Canada introduced legislation that was passed by Parliament in 2019, former Bill C-75, which included several Criminal Code amendments to improve the in court jury selection process. These amendments abolished peremptory challenges, which have been linked to discriminatory application to exclude potential jurors from jury duty; simplified and strengthened the challenge for cause process; modernized the grounds for such challenges; and clarified the power of judges to stand aside jurors to maintain public confidence in the administration of justice.

More recently, on February 8, 2022, the government introduced Senate legislation to help address the challenges faced by criminal courts caused or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Bill S-4, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Identification of Criminals Act and to make related amendments to other Acts relating to the COVID-19 response and other measures, includes proposed amendments that would, among other things, increase the use of technology in the jury selection process, including allowing prospective jurors to participate by video conference where the court considers it appropriate and with the consent of the prosecutor and the accused.

### Government Orders

The pandemic and the resulting public health guidelines for physical distancing have made it especially challenging for courts to conduct jury selection proceedings, as these proceedings can sometimes involve several hundreds of people being physically present in the same location at the same time.

The amendments proposed in Bill S-4 would help provide courts with greater flexibility in how jury selection processes are held, and it may serve to be a useful tool in accommodating prospective jurors who have been summoned to participate in the selection process.

Our government is proud to support this bill, as it recognizes the vital role and dedicated service of jurors in the Canadian justice system. As we bring the justice system into the 21st century, we will work to ensure jurors can be better supported in their roles in addition to facilitating the sharing of best practices between jurisdictions.

I want to take a moment to commend my colleagues on the justice and human rights committee for working collaboratively to study and pass this important bill. It is an example of the progress we can achieve when we work together, across party lines, to support all Canadians.

• (1830)

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

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## ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

Ottawa

June 9, 2022

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 9th day of June, 2022, at 5:09 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ian McCowan

Secretary to the Governor General and Herald Chancellor

The schedule indicates the bill assented to was Bill C-8, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update tabled in Parliament on December 14, 2021 and other measures—Chapter 5

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise virtually to speak to Bill C-5, a bill I support, although it does not go far enough in the two areas it proposes to address. Other members today in debate have wished that the bill had been proposed as two separate bills, but in any case, what we have is a bill that deals in the first part, and in the main, with removing certain sentences that are referred to as mandatory minimums, and the second part in dealing with the ongoing crisis of drug poisonings. I do not refer to them as overdoses any longer. The more I learn about what is going on in the opioid crisis with the fentanyl contamination of drug supply, the more I realize this is a poisoning crisis in which many people die.

The bill in this case introduces a second section called “Evidence-based Diversion Measures”. There really is not anything in common between the first part and the second part of Bill C-5. Let me address the first part first. I hope I can fit in all my comments, because there are many.

The use of mandatory minimums, as many Conservatives have pointed out in the debate, is not entirely a legacy of the government under former prime minister Stephen Harper, but I was here in the House during the debates on the omnibus crime bill, Bill C-10, which introduced many more mandatory minimums. Let us say, just to get it out of the way, that former Liberal governments under former prime ministers Pierre Trudeau and Jean Chrétien did bring in some mandatory minimums. Others were brought in under Bill C-10 while I was serving in this place.

Even as we brought in the mandatory minimum sentences that were under Bill C-10, it was well understood that there was no competing literature from experts in criminology and proper sentencing practices about the impacts of mandatory minimums. It was not that there were two different sources of evidences, as there was only one. All studies that looked at mandatory minimums concluded they did not work. All of them concluded that. Jurisdictions around the world that had brought in mandatory minimums, including in the state of Texas, were getting rid of them because they did not affect the crime rate, but they did have many serious negative effects on our criminal justice system. Let us try to walk through some of those.

We certainly know that Canada's crime rate has not been rising dramatically, as has been suggested by some in debate here. The last statistic I could find of our homicide rate is 1.95 homicides per 100,000 people. Obviously that should be zero. It would be ideal not to have any homicides in our society. Our rate is approximately two times the rate of the European Union, but three times lower than our neighbours to the south. The United States has an appalling rate, as we all know, of gun crime and murder. It is something that legislation we will be talking about even later tonight proposes to deal with.

We do not have a crime wave, but we do have a problem that mandatory minimums have exacerbated. Certainly, the courts have been very busy because so many of the mandatory minimum sentences, as we argued in this place as opposition members when Bill C-10 was brought in, violate the charter. We could see that it was going to violate the charter. We argued that at the time.

Currently, there have been hundreds of charter challenges against mandatory minimums in Canada: 69% of such challenges related to drug offences have been found to violate the charter and 48% of those related to firearms have been found to violate the charter. Bill C-5, when I talk about it not going far enough, does not even eliminate all of the mandatory minimums that the courts have already struck down.

Let us look at those negative side effects. We have heard primarily, and I think it is a huge issue, that mandatory minimums are one of the reasons there is a disproportionate number of people of colour and indigenous people in our prisons, which exacerbates systemic racism against members of those communities.

However, that is not the only problem with mandatory minimums. Mandatory minimums clog up our court dockets by removing the incentive for the accused to plead guilty early in the process. Mandatory minimums take away a judge's discretion to look at the person who has committed the crime before him or her and decide that this person would benefit far more from being diverted into a program that helps them with mental health issues. However, under this mandatory minimum, they have to sentence them to, for example, five years.

• (1835)

We know that mandatory minimums and longer incarceration times increase the risk that someone will be coming back. Mandatory minimums and longer incarceration times take someone who may have had one offence that was serious, and that one offence may lead them to basically getting an education in crime from spending time with criminals in prison and not having the opportunity to rehabilitate and get back into normal, civilian, non-criminal life and out of jail.

Prosecutors have a problem with dealing with mandatory minimums in that they are then the ones who take the discretion, taking it away from the judges. There is a lot wrong with mandatory minimums, including overcrowding prisons, and they have a knock-on effect of increasing the costs for the provincial governments that have to deal with prisoners. Overcrowding in our prisons is another big problem.

### *Government Orders*

In the time remaining, I want to turn to the second part of the bill, which is about evidence-based diversion measures. For the first time, this is to say that, for the law enforcement officer who comes upon someone who has a relatively small amount of prohibited drugs, it encourages that law enforcement to think about whether, in that instance, it would be better to divert this person from criminal justice to a different set of programs for mental health and to give them a warning as opposed to prosecuting them.

I have been very educated in this crisis we are facing of deaths due to opioids by one of my constituents who is extraordinarily brave. Her name is Leslie McBain. She lost her son in the opioid crisis, and she is one of the founders of a group called Moms Stop The Harm. There are now hundreds of parents who are active in that group. It breaks my heart every time I talk to someone who has lost a child in the opioid crisis.

This tiny little measure in Bill C-5 is okay but not nearly what is required. In the same way for Bill C-5, I brought forward amendments for which I have been pilloried. Members would not believe the words used against me for introducing amendments to get rid of more mandatory minimums. Let us be clear. Getting rid of mandatory minimums is not about letting prisoners walk free. It is about making our communities safer. It is about ensuring that the punishment fits the crime, and it is up to a judge to decide that.

People are not going to walk free out of prison if they have committed offences without a mandatory minimum, but they will be sent to jail for the time appropriate to their circumstances and the offence they have committed.

• (1840)

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was a little disappointed during committee. There were certain amendments brought forward to remove mandatory minimums for heinous crimes committed against children. As the father of an eight-year-old son and a soon to be seven-year-old daughter, I find that revolting.

Would the member care to apologize for entering those amendments?

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely will not apologize. This is based on evidence. In fact, the Canadian Criminal Justice Association, the Canadian Bar Association and the Canadian Sentencing Commission, which met in 1987, have recommended getting rid of all mandatory minimum sentences other than the one for murder. That is because they do not work. They do not deter crime.

We want to ensure this absolutely. I am not only a mother. I am also a grandmother, and I completely understand where the hon. member is coming from, but when we dig into the evidence and ask if these mandatory minimums keep our children safe or have any impact whatsoever on someone who is twisted and horrific with an impulse to hurt a child, no, they do not.

*Government Orders*

What we need to do is make sure those people get the punishment that fits the crime. Judges in this country will not let people who abuse children, and who were brought through the criminal justice system and found guilty, walk out of jail.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

She mentioned examples of what is being done internationally. We know, for example, that the tough-on-crime approach did not work. It has not worked in Switzerland.

Portugal, however, has a model for decriminalizing drugs that has worked well. As my colleague surely knows, in the case of Portugal, what has worked is that the whole system has really recognized the opioid issue as a public health issue.

In Quebec, we share that vision. Community and social service workers are part of a system that shares this vision of restorative justice. I worked for a community organization that did this.

However, what we lack is the means. I am talking about the financial means. It is important that the federal government do its part by increasing federal health transfers to 35% to help these organizations and to enable Quebec to reinvest in its health care system. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my Bloc colleague from Shefford for her question.

She is absolutely right. Portugal's innovative model is an example for the whole world. It is clear that we should not treat drug addicts like criminals, but rather take an approach that focuses on public and mental health.

We need to make this change here in Canada. We need to adopt the same system as Portugal to protect the lives of citizens who are suffering in our society.

[*English*]

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member's speech was very thoughtful, especially when she brought in reports and statistics that show why dropping these minimums is necessary. I too am a mother, of an eight-year-old. I advocated, as a criminal lawyer, for young people caught in the justice system and saw first-hand a lot of these types of cases.

We are constantly hearing that the people committing these crimes are not going to be held accountable, but there is still a process in place. I believe that people are being given the wrong image, as if we are dropping minimum sentences for somebody who commits an atrocious crime. If somebody was to commit a crime against my son, of course I would want them to get the maximum penalty, but I would want that to be proven in a court of law. Only then should the person, the right person, be held accountable.

• (1845)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, all of us in this place do not want horrific criminals to walk the streets. It is clear that we want the punishment to fit the crime, and that is the issue here.

It breaks my heart when I think about what happened in this place in 2014, when Nathan Cirillo was killed at the War Memorial. I was one of the members of Parliament here. It was horrific to have gunfire in this place.

That could have all been prevented. The individual who committed those crimes actually went before a judge and said he needed help and asked to be sent to jail, but he did not get that help. If we take care of people better, we can avoid crimes.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I am rising to speak to Bill C-5, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. I am going to outline three basic criticisms of the bill, partly in the context of British Columbia, so that my constituents are aware of what the government is proposing to do.

My first and largest criticism, which we have been hearing about in the House of Commons today, is the repeal of minimum mandatory penalties for gun crimes. I personally believe, like others on this side of the House, that serious violent offences committed with firearms deserve mandatory prison time. However, Bill C-5 would repeal many changes to the Criminal Code that were brought in by previous Liberal governments, including minimum mandatory penalties for robbery with a firearm, extortion with a firearm, weapons trafficking, importing or exporting an unauthorized firearm, discharging a firearm with intent and other gun-related offences.

To be clear, the Liberals are doing this because they feel these laws are unfair. They are more interested in standing up for criminals in this situation than defending our communities. Considering the 20% increase in violent crime in Canada since the Liberal government came to power in 2015, the bill is unacceptable and is an affront to victims' rights in Canada, despite the way the government may feel about it.

I have not met a family that did not want victims' rights to be upheld, nor have I met a person impacted by crime who did not want justice. The heart of the matter for me with regard to these proposed repeals is upholding justice in our country.

It is a known fact in Canada that distrust and a lack of faith in our institutions are growing. These measures will not improve that reality. If people do not perceive their justice system to be working for them, we are running into an issue of whether Canadians feel our justice system is even legitimate anymore.

*Government Orders*

The second point I would like to raise today, with my short amount of time, relates to the opioid crisis and the provisions in the bill related to trafficking of opioids and other drugs. As an MP representing British Columbia, this is a big problem, as we are the epicentre of the opioid epidemic in Canada. Every day, approximately 20 Canadians lose their lives to an opioid overdose. The number has increased by 88% since the onset of COVID-19. The Liberal government's solution is to roll back mandatory sentencing for the very people who are putting this poison on our streets.

I have not seen an engaged effort or major commitment to address this issue for Canadians since the government came into power. I will note that in 2018, the government did propose that it would invest \$231.4 million over the span of five years to combat the opioid crisis and fund recovery programs. However, the number of drug-related deaths during those five years has only risen. Frankly, I question whether \$231 million and change is even enough to put a crack in the major problem we have in British Columbia.

In my province, over 1,700 people tragically passed away from illicit drug overdoses just in 2020. This year, that number has jumped to over 2,200. Men and women of all ages are dying from the sale of hard drugs that continue to plague their communities. This bill would eliminate six MMPs that target drug dealers, specifically regarding production, trafficking, imports and exports. What message is this sending to drug traffickers? It is telling them that it is okay to do what they are doing.

By the same token, in my province, as of January 2023, the government will decriminalize illicit drugs, allowing British Columbians to carry up to 2.5 grams of fentanyl. How can the government be so complacent and look to normalize the use of this deadly substance, which is 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine?

Street drugs are a serious issue in B.C. Parents cannot take their kids to parks without first checking for used needles, in many cases.

● (1850)

Just the other day at my son's school, I wept after I dropped him off, because at the entrance of my son's classroom, a place where kids are meant to be safe, was a bunch of drug paraphernalia that a supply teacher had to clean up in front of the local member of Parliament. It is a shame. Even in this new agreement, the government is unable to even enforce keeping drugs off our school grounds because our police officers do not have enough tools or resources.

Canadians struggling with addiction deserve compassion that leads them toward the mental, physical and cultural health supports they need, especially in indigenous communities. However, we have not done that as a society yet.

If our goal as parliamentarians is to keep people safe, we need to uphold the rights of all Canadians, and that includes the children at my kid's school. Will the measure today or the agreement with British Columbia decrease the number of people impacted by opioids? No. Will the measure today make gun violence go down? Absolutely not, and I fear it will do the opposite.

Just a few days ago, the media reported that a man from Mission was charged after a large drug and gun seizure in 2020. It was the largest bust in the history of Ridge Meadows RCMP. The accused faces seven counts of possession of a controlled substance for the purpose of trafficking, including for methamphetamine, cocaine, fentanyl, ketamine, codeine, hydromorphone and morphine. They were discovered in two residences, one in Maple Ridge and one in my riding in Mission, after search warrants were issued for both properties. Under Bill C-5, the individual involved in this gun and drug trafficking scheme and smuggling incident would not face a minimum sentence, and that is not acceptable.

The third criticism I will talk about is in direct response to what I have heard the Prime Minister say. It relates to the overrepresentation of indigenous people, Black Canadians and members of marginalized populations in our justice system.

The Prime Minister has claimed in the House that the bill would help solve the problem of the overrepresentation of indigenous people, Black Canadians and members of marginalized populations in our justice system. I recognize and acknowledge that certain groups are disproportionately overrepresented in our prisons and more must be done to address this issue. However, despite the noble intent on this point, this legislation, I would argue, would not lead to a different outcome. Reducing mandatory minimum penalties would reduce incarceration rates for everybody, regardless of race or ethnicity. The proportion, therefore, would not change at all. Simply put, the Liberals, on this matter, seem to be high on rhetoric and low on finding real solutions to the issues of marginalized Canadians.

In my riding of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon and the neighbouring riding of Abbotsford, I can attest that the government cut back on gang prevention funding when the Liberals came to power. In fact, the United Way did a major fundraiser to make up for what the government took away from programs in our schools that prevent children from entering a life of gang activity.

I argue today that instead of changing these laws, we should see concrete investments and maybe a national strategy to help our youth, and put real effort into investing in our youth to give children who are on the precipice of a life of gang activity a real chance of moving past it. Frankly, we had a model in Abbotsford that was working pretty well, but unfortunately we do not have the resources we had before.

*Government Orders*

In conclusion, I fear that Bill C-5 would not make our communities any safer. In fact, I fear it would do the opposite. Streets will still be infested with drugs, and gun-related crimes will still continue to rise. Drug users will not receive the compassionate care they need, and victims of gun violence will not experience closure and potentially justice.

If I had more time, I would take a serious look at other issues within the bill as well. For example, the Liberal government is proposing to apply conditional sentencing to offences such as prison breach, sexual assault, kidnapping, trafficking in persons, abduction, breaking and entering, and assaulting a police officer. I do not know of a single police officer in this country who wants conditional sentences for that, and if there are some in my riding, they should talk to me; I am open to hearing their suggestions.

This soft-on-crime approach will not keep people safe. It will not stop the gun violence in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon and in the Fraser Valley. Frankly, I do not even know why the government brought the bill forward.

• (1855)

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I know we cannot call for quorum based on the unconstitutional provisions of Motion No. 11 brought forward and adopted by the NDP-Liberals, but it is very important to note that the Constitution requires that we have quorum. In consideration of this bill, should it be challenged in court later, the House will not have done its work to ensure that quorum was in place for the debate of that bill. That speaks to the unconstitutionality of the motion that prevents us from doing that quorum call.

There was a ruling from the Supreme Court in 1985 that section 133 of the Constitution Act, 1867 and section 23 of the Manitoba Act, 1870 respecting the use of English and French languages in the records and journals of the House of Parliament of Canada are mandatory. They must be obeyed.

The House is the master of this place. However, it cannot change the Constitution when it sees fit unless bills are passed and unless the Constitution is cracked open for that purpose. It is very important that this is considered, and that it is noted for posterity, and that it is noted in Hansard. Should this bill be challenged in court, it is going to be a foundational piece of an argument against the constitutionality of this bill that it was debated without quorum as required by the Constitution of this country.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I thank the member for his intervention. It is duly noted. I know the Speaker has already made a decision on this.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Fredericton.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at the end of his speech, the hon. member questioned why the government brought this bill forward to begin with. I would encourage the member to look at the extensive research around mandatory minimums and the harms they actually cause in the justice system.

I want to pick up on something he said. I completely agree that Canadians struggling with addiction deserve compassion. This is a very important line from his speech today. I would also pick up on some of the words that the member for Vancouver Kingsway said

around statistics: that about 70% of those in prisons currently may have undiagnosed mental health issues or addictions.

In recognition of the social determinants of crime, if Bill C-5 is not something to be considered by this member, what should we be doing to address some of these issues?

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, that was a very good question. My office is adjacent to a shelter in Mission, British Columbia, and I speak to a lot of people who are both suffering from opioids and who live on the streets. A lot of them do not have access to care. A lot of them do not have access to wraparound services. A lot of them do not have access to housing. In British Columbia, before the agreement between B.C. and the federal government, we already had de facto decriminalization.

What we need to see are real and concrete investments. I know investment would cost a lot of money. In fact, it was one of the big platform commitments of the Conservatives. We need a national approach to addressing the mental health and addictions crisis in the country, and we need to put real dollars into communities to give people the recovery beds and options for recovery that they are looking for.

• (1900)

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that was a very passionate speech that really hit home for me, as I have a young daughter.

I just want the member to expand a bit. I could not agree more that we should be focused in the House on going after the root causes of issues such as gang crime and drugs, and helping our youth deal with addiction and mental health, etc.

The member alluded to a program that lost funding under the current federal government. I would like to know a little more about that. That is the type of program we should be spending time debating and investing in as a government.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, Public Safety Canada funded a program in Abbotsford, given some of the problems we face with gangs, gang violence and drug trafficking. It brought in counsellors who worked very closely with the Abbotsford police department and also worked directly with the students identified by the school district as being most at risk of entering a life of crime.

Those counsellors were able to get information from police officers and the school district, and they were able to apply a compassionate approach. They were able to work one on one with these students: those most at risk. They were able to make a difference. In some cases, they were able to push children in the right direction when maybe they did not have those supports at home.

*Government Orders*

That is one real way we can address gang violence and the opioid crisis. It is by working with the kids most at risk.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member is aware that a number of years ago the Supreme Court struck down a number of mandatory minimum penalties because they were unconstitutional, specifically with respect to section 12 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees against cruel and unusual punishment. In the Nur decision, a quote from the Supreme Court was that, “Empirical evidence suggests that mandatory minimum sentences do not, in fact, deter crimes”.

To understand better, I am curious how he sees the opposite here.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, the only way I can answer that is to say that I have a friend in my community, and I will not mention his name, whose son was gunned down in his house. I knew his son. He was 19 when he died. I met him when he was 13 or 14 when I first started knocking on doors in politics. He was on the precipice of entering a life of crime and was gunned down in his house. To this day, his parents have not gotten justice for that and they are never going to get justice for that. All they want is some closure in their lives in knowing the person who committed that crime was locked up behind bars, but really what everyone perceives to have happened in the case of Abbotsford is that the young man who shot his son was later gunned down in a series of violent crimes. We need to set basic standards to uphold a level of justice to give the victims of crimes a level of closure.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak to Bill C-5, which seeks to make changes to the Criminal Code that would make life easier for criminals charged with violent firearms offences and criminals who are fuelling the opioid crisis here in Canada. Most of the offences we are discussing today, for which the Liberals want to get rid of mandatory jail time, are crimes that involve firearms.

To be clear, the charges for which the government is seeking to remove mandatory jail time are not for otherwise innocent individuals who were in the wrong place at the wrong time. This bill would specifically allow repeat offenders to avoid mandatory jail sentences. These are hardened criminals who have already made the choice to live outside the law and have not made an effort to change their behaviour. These are the people the Liberals would be helping with Bill C-5.

Before I get too far in my speech, and with some leniency from the House as this might be my last chance to speak before we rise for the summer, I would like to draw the attention of the House and those watching at home to something I find quite unique that is happening in my riding leading up the municipal elections on October 24 here in Ontario.

In Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, there are seven lower tier municipalities. Come election day, at least six of those will have a new face as head of council. So far, six of the seven mayors, with the exception of David Burton of Highlands East, have announced they will not be seeking re-election.

That is a major changeover, and I would be remiss if I did not take this time to acknowledge the immense contribution these re-

markable individuals have made in their communities. I will quickly name them and then get back to Bill C-5.

In Algonquin Highlands, Carol Moffatt, after 16 years of public service, will not be on the ballot. Mayor Moffatt was first elected as councillor in 2006. She was elected mayor in 2010 and then acclaimed as mayor in 2014 and again 2018, where she led one of two all-female municipal councils in Ontario.

In Brock Township, after the sudden passing of the township's first female mayor, Debbie Bath-Hadden in 2021, John Grant, a former councillor and Durham regional councillor and mayor, stepped into the role and pledged to guide the municipality with a steady hand into the next election.

Scott McFadden will not seek re-election in Cavan-Monaghan after being first elected as deputy mayor in 2010, then elected mayor in 2014 and re-elected in 2018.

After 16 years in public service, Andrea Roberts will not re-offer as mayor of Dysart. In addition to leading council, Mayor Roberts previously served as councillor and deputy mayor. Joining her is Patrick Kennedy, deputy mayor of Dysart, who informed the community recently he would not be seeking re-election after just one term.

In Kawartha Lakes, Andy Letham will not seek a third term as mayor. He was first elected to lead the municipality in 2014 and re-elected in 2018. He also spent a term as a councillor in 2003.

Brent Devolin, first elected in 2014 and re-elected in 2018, will not seek re-election and a third term as mayor of Minden Hills.

Over the years, in my previous role with my predecessor, I got to know each one of these municipal leaders very well. I consider them friends and not just colleagues. Each council and staff faced many challenges during their time. They dealt with natural disasters and the COVID pandemic while at the same time claiming many accomplishments, such as new community centres, Internet connectivity, improved roads and bridges, new parks, and increased water and sewer capacity to prepare for future growth. The list, of course, goes on.

### *Government Orders*

It is no secret that municipal representatives are often the closest to the issues being felt at home. Most, especially in small and rural communities, are accessible to the public and many openly publish their personal telephone numbers. All of the mayors and deputy mayors I just mentioned, along with the councillors and staff, have placed their marks on the people they serve. I am confident to say that those not seeking re-election depart leaving their respective municipalities in strong shape and well prepared for the future.

Now, I move on to today's debate on Bill C-5. As I mentioned off the top, it is a bill that would remove mandatory jail time in some circumstances for a lot of crimes that involve firearms. Again, the charges for which the government would be removing the mandatory jail time would specifically allow repeat offenders to avoid mandatory jail sentences.

For example, the bill proposes to eliminate mandatory jail time for criminals charged with robbery with a firearm, extortion with a firearm, weapons trafficking, importing or exporting knowing a firearm is unauthorized, discharging a firearm with intent, using a firearm in the commission of an offence, possession of a prohibited or restricted firearm with ammunition, possession of a weapon obtained by the commission of an offence, and possession for the purpose of weapons trafficking. These are just a few of the types of offences for which mandatory jail time would be removed under Bill C-5.

● (1905)

If people do not think it can get much worse after the list I just mentioned, it really does. In this bill, the Liberals are making more criminal charges eligible to receive conditional sentences, also known as house arrest.

There may be cases where house arrest is acceptable, but house arrest should never be made available to dangerous offenders and criminals whose actions have victimized an innocent person or family. Should a criminal who abducted a child under the age of 14 be eligible for house arrest? Should a criminal who benefits financially from the scourge of human trafficking be eligible for house arrest? Should someone convicted of kidnapping get house arrest? Should criminals charged with sexual assault be able to serve their time back in that same community, potentially near their victims?

The Liberals say yes to all of the above. There is an even better one still to come. The Liberals are trying to expand house arrest for those charged with prison breach. In what world does that make any sense? We would be rewarding people for breaking out of prison with house arrest, so they do not have to bother spending time behind bars if they can just break out.

As many members have said in this debate, one really cannot make this stuff up. The government is trying to make a complete mockery of the Canadian justice system, demoralize law enforcement and frighten victims, all at the same time.

A few months ago, the community I live in, Lindsay, held a public forum. The specific topic was to talk about the increase of petty crimes in the neighbourhood. Citizens did not feel safe. They had concerns that criminals were getting arrested, and a few moments later they were out and back on the streets, what is called a "revolving door". They did not seem to feel that the justice system was

working for them. We had a community meeting to discuss this. What was talked about a lot at the time, a few months ago, was Bill C-75, another bill that decreased sentences and made them more lenient so criminals could get out of jail more easily. The Crown prosecutor made that very clear. The Crown's hands were tied. This was a piece of legislation, and obviously the law has to be enforced through the judicial system, so these were the cards they were dealt. The community felt it.

As my friend from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon just mentioned, people need to have faith in the criminal justice system. When they pay their taxes and do everything right, they expect a safe community and they expect their government to work for them and to provide laws that allow law enforcement to do its job and keep the community safe. They just were not feeling it.

These people are just becoming victims, scared in their own community. People are scared to go out at night. This is a community of 20,000 people. It was unheard of, just a few years ago, for people to feel they could not leave their house at night. It is unbelievable. It really is. We have just heard story after story from colleagues in this place about how communities are becoming less safe because of poor legislation brought in by the government.

If we want to talk about ways to help people, this party had a massive plan to fund mental health and treat it as health, to talk about getting people treatment for their addictions and expanding economic opportunities across the board to Canadians in general. There was a robust plan to deal with that. At the same time, those who are committing the most heinous of crimes, the ones I just mentioned, should be behind bars, not walking our streets. I know police have said we cannot arrest our way out of this, and I totally agree. That is why we had those robust options, as well as putting those who are violent, repeat offenders behind bars, where they deserve to be, not out on our streets.

To conclude, I will be strongly voting against Bill C-5, and I encourage each and every member of this House to do so as well.

● (1910)

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock for his passionate intervention and his testament to the hard-working councillors in his region. It was very nice, but it was good to hear him come back to the bill eventually.

*Government Orders*

He began by speaking about guns. We just had a federal election, and gun laws were a central part of that. We did make a promise to get more dangerous weapons off our streets. We are doing that. What is important for the member and his party to understand is that what we are doing in the legislation here does not stop police from charging people with gun offences, or prosecutors from pursuing convictions. What it does do, however, is make sure that serious criminals face serious penalties, while also addressing the overrepresentation of Black, indigenous and racialized Canadians in the criminal justice system.

Perhaps the member might reflect to the group here this evening on how the members of his community feel about this fairer, more respectful approach to dealing with visible minorities in the criminal justice system.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my friend's leniency as I was talking about the work that my fine municipal counterparts were doing in their communities.

As I mentioned in my speech, there were a number of platforms that each party in the House campaigned on very hard. Mental health was one. Addictions were another. Safe communities were another one we championed quite well.

Where we differ in the conversation is on the plan in the bill to eliminate mandatory jail time for those charged with robbery with a firearm, extortion with a firearm, weapons trafficking, and importing or exporting unauthorized firearms, which we know is responsible in the vast majority of cases for the shootings in our major cities. That is what we need to crack down on, the smuggling, ensuring that those committing the most serious crimes are behind bars and not in our communities.

• (1915)

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's intervention this evening was an important intervention. Obviously, the concern on our side is that, on the one hand, we see with Bill C-21 an appearance, real or otherwise, that the Liberals are increasing firearms laws, but on the other hand, with Bill C-5, there is actually an option for those offences to be minimized and not have mandatory sentences. An example the member mentioned was the illegal use of a firearm in the commission of a crime, and there is a whole series of things.

I am wondering if he could comment on this: on the one hand, giving the appearance, as the Liberal government is doing, of strengthening gun laws, which will have no effect, and, on the other hand, diminishing that and allowing criminals to be even more emboldened, more brazen in their activities.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his strong advocacy of my riding, which he drives through almost weekly on his way to Ottawa, and I know he does love that Kawartha Dairy ice cream.

We mentioned gun crime. If we are talking about reducing the shootings in our major cities, we need to stop the smuggling of these firearms into the country. That is one area that has been exceptionally clear in much of the testimony we heard. We need to ensure that those using a firearm in the commission of an offence,

if convicted and going through the judicial system, are dealt with in an appropriate manner.

Under this legislation, convicted criminals have the option of house arrest for abducting a child under the age of 14. There is house arrest for human trafficking. This makes no sense. Someone convicted of kidnapping can get house arrest. This makes absolutely no sense. Those are the most dangerous of the dangerous, the ones who do not want to participate in society. They should not be back on the street or at home serving out their sentences.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this important debate today on Bill C-5 at third reading.

It is disappointing that this bill was returned from committee virtually with all the same flaws that it arrived there with. One of the issues I want to highlight with Bill C-5 is how it would allow dangerous criminals to avoid jail time and to serve their sentences at home, in the community. In particular, Bill C-5 would extend house arrest to a number of serious crimes, including criminal harassment, sexual assault, kidnapping, abduction of a person under 14 and trafficking in persons for material benefit, in section 279.02. Extending house arrest to those offences would place victims at serious risk of abuse from their trafficker or abuser.

Earlier this year, when I asked the justice minister why this bill did this, he rejected the premise of my question. The justice minister does not seem to know what Bill C-5 would allow. It would allow human traffickers to serve their sentence at home. This is crazy, but the minister does not even know his own bill. Human trafficking is a vicious crime and traffickers prey on the most vulnerable. Criminal harassment, sexual assault and kidnapping are violent crimes by dangerous individuals.

That is why I am surprised to see this bill supported by my hon. colleagues in the NDP. The member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke has introduced Bill C-202 on coercive control. I support that bill, and I believe I was the first MP to jointly second it. I have also written to the Minister of Justice to ask him to support Bill C-202. I have heard from constituents who have experienced domestic violence and face challenges accessing justice and safety, in particular in the face of coercive control by their former partners during and/or following the separation.

Further, having worked with survivors of human trafficking, I also know that coercive and controlling behaviour is the primary method used by human traffickers to control their victims, and many traffickers seek to continue to control their victims after the victims have left or escaped. Therefore, I have recommended that the dynamic between traffickers and victims of trafficking be included within the definition of persons "connected" in Bill C-202 or government legislation on coercive control. This would provide an additional tool to counter-trafficking units to protect victims of trafficking.

### *Government Orders*

The fact is that at no time should we be allowing individuals who traffic or kidnap or sexually assault others to serve their sentences in the community. This was raised multiple times at committee by witnesses.

The chief of police of Laval, Chief Pierre Brochet, said that his force had experienced a crisis relating to sexual exploitation a few years ago. He said:

In Quebec, we are making the fight against sexual exploitation a priority, because many minors are taken and exploited by unscrupulous individuals. It is obvious that crimes such as those you mentioned must be severely punished. If we were to decide instead to impose suspended sentences on those who commit this type of crime, this could send an extremely difficult message to the victims.

Brantford chief of police Robert Davis also raised this concern about the conditional sentences for violent crimes like human trafficking and sexual assault. He testified:

We already have weak bail conditions. They will be exacerbated by weak sentences. Essentially, conditional sentences are so that they can serve in the comfort of their homes. That is not a sentence. They will be able to operate.... There are sexual assaults and kidnapping that we see tied to the drug industry with firearms being involved. There's trafficking in persons. If we're serious about human trafficking, are we going to allow house arrest for a human trafficker? It makes no sense.

Jennifer Dunn, the executive director of the London Abused Women's Centre, also testified on the danger of the government's plan to allow house arrest for human trafficking. She said:

When we consider human trafficking as a conditional sentence based on the section of the Criminal Code you mentioned, it really undermines the seriousness of this particular crime.... The problem is that when you have an individual who has a conditional sentence and is put back into the community, oftentimes women are faced with having to face the offender as well, and that is very harmful.... It really puts women at a higher risk, and it makes women have to watch their backs wherever they go.

Jennifer emphasized this: "Women are left to pick up the pieces."

● (1920)

That is what this bill would do. It would leave women and survivors to pick up the pieces instead of having a government that cares enough to keep their abusers and traffickers in jail.

I also want to share the voice of Kelly Tallon Franklin, who is a survivor and the founder of Courage for Freedom. She wrote to me and the other co-chairs of the All Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. She stated, "As a survivor of human trafficking and child sexual exploitation and abuse, I am both personally and professionally aware of how the results of certain crimes named in this bill would give access to potential criminals to victims and survivors on house arrest or accelerated bail. With over 529 active engagements with survivors that are minors since 2013, I can attest, with the support of the case notes and the testimonials, that there are already instances of breaches of bail and house arrest conditions resulting in harm and repeated violence to victims and risks to their families and communities. These are just two small samplings of the lack of protection in our communities and across the country. As the business and professional women of Canada and as a chairperson in anti-human trafficking, I am gravely troubled that house arrest is being made available for the offence that could cause women and girls at greater risk of revictimization and sex trafficking, gender-based violence and femicide situations by a lack of protection and prevention. Our volunteers and committee team members, legal and policy analysts continue to research

policy and laws that affect the requirement to the removal for amendment of these serious offences by any way of any consideration."

One of the examples that Kelly shared was an Alberta man named Jade Buro, who police had to track down last fall again after he breached his bail conditions. Jade was under a 24-hour house arrest at the time for allegations of human trafficking. What did he do? He cut off his ankle monitor and the police had to issue several public warnings that he was considered violent and dangerous and may have access to firearms. It took the police two months to track him down. With the adoption of Bill C-5, how many more human traffickers, abusers or kidnappers will breach their conditions and continue to hurt and exploit their victims?

It is unconscionable that the government wants to place such a great burden on the victims by allowing their traffickers to serve their time in the community. Once again, I will ask my Liberal and NDP colleagues why they believe that pimps and sex traffickers should be serving their sentences at home. In what situation would they support a kidnapper receiving house arrest?

● (1925)

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate that the hon. member added the lens around women, in particular. As a member who has appeared at the indigenous and northern affairs committee on behalf of his colleagues, are you familiar with the Gladue principles and the intention behind the Gladue principles as a way for judges to consider the unique circumstances or experiences of indigenous peoples, to consider systemic and background factors of the offender and the types of sentencing, procedures and sanctions that may be appropriate in the circumstances?

I am wondering if the member could comment on the Gladue principles, in particular, and whether or not he sees the merit in such an approach.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would remind the member to direct her comments through the chair. Members cannot speak directly to another member and use the word "you".

The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you are well aware of the Gladue principles, as am I. The Gladue principles often come with a Gladue report. That is something that is done and offered back to the judge, saying what a situation is for a first nation, Métis or Inuit person in Canada who can ask for a Gladue report to be done and submitted to the judge. These kinds of things should always be taken into account in sentencing.

What I would also like to see is that we maintain mandatory minimums, that if people do the crime, they do the time. We want to ensure that no matter who people are in this country, no matter what their backgrounds are, for similar crimes, there are similar punishments. The deterrence factor of these punishments is an important aspect of our criminal justice system.

That said, I do believe in redemption. I do believe that people can change, and I hope that our justice system will work to ensure that we do have rehabilitation and reintegration.

I would note that the member for Tobique—Mactaquac put forward a great bill to reduce recidivism. I very much supported that bill. I hope it will have the impact on our justice system that we are all hoping it will.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-5 deals with the issue of minimum sentences and diversion. Beyond the question of whether or not minimum sentences should be abolished, what impact will their abolition have on the communities in my colleague's riding or province?

We are seeing a rise in gun violence, and the government is proposing to eliminate minimum sentences for a number of firearm offences. I would therefore like to hear my colleague's views on this. Once again, I am not talking about whether these minimum sentences should be eliminated; rather, I would like to know what impact eliminating them would have and what people in his riding think about this.

[*English*]

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his work at the justice committee. He has been thoughtful and logical in pursuit of his work there and I appreciate that.

In northern Alberta, crime is generally on the rise. In particular, rural crime around theft is a big issue, and firearms are often involved. Folks who are travelling around stealing things in northern Alberta often are armed. That continues to be a major challenge. One thing we see is that the RCMP is unable or does not have the resources to combat this. Also, there are the great distances that have to be travelled across northern Alberta. The criminals seem to operate with impunity in broad daylight.

Bail and mandatory minimum sentencing are things that people often come to me to talk about. They say it is just a revolving door, that these guys go in and come out right away. In some cases, they are arrested and are back out on bail the same evening, only to be arrested again within hours. This is a major challenge in northern Alberta. Folks are losing confidence in our justice system and our police force being able to put these people behind bars.

• (1930)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Bill C-5 is legislation that seeks to reduce sentences for violent criminals. It is the same bill, unfortunately, that was introduced as Bill C-22 in the last Parliament before the Prime Minister called his completely unnecessary \$630-million pandemic election.

For the second consecutive election, the Liberal Party received fewer votes than the Conservative Party. The voters did not give the Prime Minister a mandate to experiment with the criminal justice system or any other ideological experiment on how Canadians govern themselves. The evidence on how opportunistic the election was is the length of time it took for the government to recall Parliament to avoid democratic scrutiny of its failed policies. Parliamentary committees were only formed just before we were shut down for the Christmas season. So much for the sense of urgency in calling an election.

During the election, the Prime Minister and his party used vulnerable and marginalized Canadians, the same Canadians who they say suffer from systemic racism from a justice system they have been running for the last six and a half years, as a cover for the real objective of the bill, which is to pursue a Liberal ideological agenda of going soft on criminals. Canadians heard endless political rhetoric from the Liberals about how firearms pose a significant threat to public safety and the security of our communities.

As has been the Liberal practice in all eight elections I successfully ran in, the Prime Minister, on cue, attacked the one group that is statistically proven to be the most law-abiding, that being Canadians who own and responsibly use firearms. Within three and a half weeks of the House reconvening following the election, what did the Liberal Party do? It introduced legislation not to get tough on firearms offences, but to help criminals who illegally use firearms and put the lives of people at risk.

Bill C-5 will allow criminals to stay out of jail and in the community. It is only common sense, when the court system puts dangerous offenders back out on the street rather than putting them behind bars where they belong, that there is going to be a greater risk they are going to commit other offences. It is known that there is a high proportion of repeat offenders in Canada's criminal justice system and Bill C-5 will contribute to the perpetuating of the backlog in the courts.

There has been silence from the justice minister that Bill C-5 will lead to our justice system being overwhelmed by repeat offenders, basically exacerbating the situation in our trial system, which is already heavily backlogged with cases. This backlog led to the infamous Jordan decision. Canadians would be interested in hearing how Bill C-5 will increase the safety and security of individuals as applied to the Jordan decision.

*Government Orders*

The Prime Minister and his Liberal-socialist alliance want Canadians to believe that Bill C-5 is only about reducing minimum sentences for simple drug possession, but that is not so. Most Canadians would be alarmed to learn that this legislation is aimed at eliminating mandatory prison time for criminals who prey on our communities and victimize the vulnerable.

Bill C-5 puts the rights of criminals first and the rights of victims last. It endangers public safety, while doing nothing to help marginalized vulnerable Canadians. Bill C-5 proposes to eliminate mandatory prison time not for petty crimes, but for crimes like drug trafficking and acts of violence. It would even allow violent criminals to serve their sentences on house arrest and not in prison, putting communities at continued risk.

Let us now look at the elimination of mandatory prison time for firearm offences. In contrast to the Liberal election spin that demonizes lawful firearms owners to placate the anti-firearms lobby on it being so-called tough on gun violence, there is the complete hypocrisy of Bill C-5. It will eliminate mandatory minimum sentences related to gun crimes, including serious gun crimes, such as robbery with a firearm, extortion with a firearm, using a firearm in the commission of an offence, discharging a firearm with intent, which is Criminal Code language for shooting at someone, illegal possession of a prohibited or restricted firearm, importing an unauthorized firearm, discharging a firearm recklessly, and other firearms offences, such as weapons trafficking, importing or exporting knowing the firearm is unauthorized, possession of a prohibited or restricted firearm with ammunition, possession of a weapon obtained by the commission of an offence in Canada and possession for the purpose of weapons trafficking.

● (1935)

What Bill C-5 does, which is baked into every piece of legislation brought forward by the Liberal Party, is blame the victim. Conservatives believe that criminals should be held responsible for their actions. Victims should have just as many rights in our criminal justice system as criminals do.

Canadians know from the famous Kokanee grope incident comment about women perceiving things differently that the fake-feminist Prime Minister likes to blame the victim.

Violence against women continues to be fact of life in Canada. On average, one woman is killed by her intimate partner every five days. On September 22, 2015, Carol Culleton, Nathalie Warmerdam and Anastasia Kuzyk were murdered by someone known to each of them. The man finally convicted of their murders had a long criminal history, including charges involving two of the three women. Happening in my eastern Ontario riding during the middle of the 2015 federal election campaign, their violent death scarcely caused a ripple in the too cynical national media, leaving the families and the rural Ontario communities these women were members of to grieve in silence.

I can assure the Prime Minister that I have not forgotten what happened to these women. The system failed these women. Talk is cheap when I hear members of the government saying to scrap the progress our Conservative governments made in reforming the criminal justice system, but I invite the Minister of Justice to spend some time listening to the families of these murdered women.

Changing our laws to blame the victims by giving the criminal a pat on the head is just plain wrong. Let us not allow Carol, Nathalie, Anastasia and all the other women who have been murdered by their intimate partners to have died in vain.

During this debate, Canadians have heard the Liberal Party confirm in their statements, while omitting the fact that they have been the government for the last six and a half years, that they have presided over a justice system plagued by systemic racism. The Criminal Code is supposed to apply equally to everyone in Canada, and if the government were actually serious about ending systemic racism, it would be tabling a plan to build the communities instead of resorting to blame-the-victim legislation.

An Ottawa publication has stated that Sam Goldstein, a criminal lawyer and former Crown attorney, has said that mandatory minimum sentences act as general deterrents to crime and has argued that if there are problems with marginalized communities, like social dislocation and poverty, fixing those makes more sense than adjusting criminal law. He said, "I don't like it when politicians try to interfere in criminal justice for their own social justice ends, because ultimately it doesn't serve people well." He expanded further, noting that moves toward support for therapeutic drug courts makes more sense than decriminalization.

Mandatory minimum sentences simply protect society at every level. They deter crime. They make society safer. They do not violate the Constitution. Remember, the Criminal Code is supposed to apply equally to everyone in Canada. Mandatory minimum sentences do not discriminate against those who are marginalized, and if they do intrude on judicial independence, it is to restrain activist judges who forget that their role is to uphold the law, not to rewrite it in every case.

Do not tinker with amendments to the law that will make people feel less safe in their own homes. The public has a right to feel safe, and that is no longer possible for Carol, Nathalie and Anastasia, whom our criminal justice system failed.

In closing, Bill C-5 puts the rights of criminals first and the rights of victims last. It endangers public safety while doing nothing to help marginalized and vulnerable Canadians. This bill needs to be defeated.

● (1940)

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, a large portion of the member's speech talked about murder and intimate partner violence leading to murder. I am wondering if the member realizes that this piece of legislation does not apply to murder. I think the House deserves an apology, because it is an extremely misleading speech that the member has given in relation to this piece of legislation.

*Government Orders*

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, here we go with the Prime Minister's chorus of misinformation and disinformation.

What this bill would do is get rid of mandatory minimum sentences for assault, and each one of the victims I mentioned, for whom the inquiry is ongoing right now, had suffered assault by this man previously. He was let out of jail. If he had been kept in prison, these women might be alive today.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, my understanding of the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, from hearing her speeches in this place before, is that she generally seems to prefer less government interference. Removing mandatory minimum penalties gives more judicial discretion to remove government interference from the sentencing, so I wonder if the member could help me understand this disconnect in this particular speech she just gave.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, the mandatory minimum sentences are guidance. They are to prevent repeat offences from happening and to keep people in prison to protect victims and future victims. Mandatory minimums do not take a right away from any judge; they provide guidance, and the judges are supposed to listen to what Parliament decides—not change what the will of the people is, as expressed through their representation, but interpret what it is we give them and provide for the safety of future victims.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague's speech really resonated with me, particularly because she spoke at length about femicide and crimes related to domestic violence, an issue that is currently being studied by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Generally speaking, the Bloc Qu b cois has expressed some reservations and concerns about abolishing certain mandatory minimum sentences, particularly those related to firearms. We agree that perhaps we should continue to work together on this bill to improve it, particularly in that regard, in order to prevent certain crimes. Could my colleague comment on that?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, that was the peculiar thing about Bill C-5. The government says it is very concerned about crimes involving firearms. What it would do is take away the requirement for people who commit crimes using a firearm to go into jail. Instead, they would be let out to commit the same crimes again and hurt more people.

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my friend from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke clearly outlined that what we have here is lazy Liberal legislation that again revictimizes people who have had to deal with criminal activity. It would allow more criminals to get out on the street more quickly. It would penalize legal firearms owners while giving illegal gun smugglers and people who use guns in illegal ways a “get out of jail free” card.

I want to compliment the member on her great work and ask her why the Liberals are actually reducing and removing mandatory minimum sentences that were brought in by the former prime minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

• (1945)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, quite apart from the history, with respect to the mandatory minimum sentences, the individual about whom I spoke, who killed the three women whom we are reliving the grief with right now through the community, had there been the mandatory minimum sentences in place, would have been kept in place because of his assaults and other choking crimes against these women. Instead, he was allowed to go free—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mend s):** Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the House of Commons to join the debate on Bill C-5, which is a seriously flawed bill, in my opinion.

It presents itself as wanting to keep Canadians safe against gun crime and illicit drugs, but if the bill is passed by Parliament, it will eliminate mandatory minimum penalties for many of the serious crimes listed under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and many of the serious firearms-related crimes listed under the Criminal Code as well.

This hits very close to home, as it does, I am sure, for many Canadians. Last year we witnessed a series of gangland-style murders in Metro Vancouver, including two in my home riding of Langley—Aldergrove. It was shocking to see familiar places in Langley on the news and in the newspaper. One of the murders happened in front of the Sportsplex where I drop my grandsons off to play hockey, right in broad daylight. There was another one in the parking lot of the Willowbrook mall in downtown Langley, and there were a series of other gangland-style murders throughout the Lower Mainland, including at the Vancouver International Airport, do none of this is theoretical; it hits all of us, and it is a real problem that real Canadians across this country feel personally. We want to feel safe when we are out and about in town, on our streets, in shopping malls and schools and hockey rinks, but, sadly, that is not always the case.

It is our job as parliamentarians to do whatever we can to develop laws, regulations and policies that are designed to be and will be effective in keeping Canadians safe. However, the soft-on-crime bill before us that would eliminate mandatory minimum penalties for many of these serious crimes does not do that. I believe that the Liberals are introducing the bill in the faint hope that our prisons might become fairer and safer for criminals, and I believe it fails there as well.

*Government Orders*

The public safety committee, on which I sit, recently completed a study on gun control, illicit arms trafficking and the increasing numbers of gun crimes committed by members of street gangs. It is a very important study, and we learned that there is a very close tie between the drug trade and gun violence. In that study, we were seeking to find and introduce tools and policies to give guidance to Parliament to combat both of them, but again Bill C-5 misses the mark.

We heard from experts, and in the process we learned that guns and drug trafficking are inherently related to each other. This is what Mitch Bourbonniere, an outreach worker active in the city of Winnipeg, had to say about the tie-in between gang violence, guns and drug trafficking: “Anyone in Winnipeg can purchase a firearm illegally, much the same way as you would be purchasing illegal drugs. My understanding is that guns are manufactured mostly in the United States and smuggled through our two provincial borders and the American border.”

Evan Bray, chief of police with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, said that “we can't overstate the importance of seeing the correlation between drugs and drug-related activity and firearms. They are intertwined.”

Mike Rowe, staff sergeant at the Vancouver Police Department, said that “Yes, certainly, sir, there's a correlation there that I don't think can be disputed, especially as the manufacturing or sale of fentanyl produces an extremely lucrative drug market.”

Grand Chief Abram Benedict of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne said that “It is no secret to anyone that our community is exploited by organized crime, but what we do know is that many individuals involved in cross-border trafficking do it because of the money.”

We discovered at the public safety committee that to tackle gun crime, we need to tackle illicit drug trafficking, as they are so closely tied together.

Another fact of life that shocks Canadians is the number of deaths from toxic drugs that are readily available on our streets.

● (1950)

I am going to focus on my home province of British Columbia, where last year and so far this year, five people die every day of illicit drug toxicity. This is completely unacceptable. Seventy-four per cent of these victims are age 30 to 59 and 77% are male. More than half of these deaths occurred at home when the person was alone.

I grieve for a family whose son died of an apparent overdose about a year ago. He had a family. He had people who loved him. He had children who relied on him. He had a good job. He had a boss and co-workers who relied on him. One evening, at home, alone, he consumed fentanyl-laced drugs and became part of our nation's terrifying statistics. The question remains open as to how he got his hands on fentanyl-laced drugs. His family wants to know.

Today, we are talking about Bill C-5, which would eliminate mandatory minimum penalties for drug-related crimes. Canadians must be made aware that the government has also introduced, in the province of British Columbia, an agreement by which possession of

small amounts of illicit drugs for personal use would be decriminalized.

The problem is twofold. First, even a small amount of fentanyl can and regularly does kill people. Second, it would be indisputable evidence before Parliament that gun trafficking and illicit drug trafficking are the opposite sides of the same coin. It should be evident even to the casual observer that easing up on penalties for drug traffickers and gun traffickers is the wrong way to go, and certainly will not make our streets any safer.

The criminal justice system talks a lot about the principles behind sentencing. The two principles are denunciation and deterrence. Society denounces certain behaviour and, of course, we want to deter future behaviour like that. Parliament, over the years, has recognized these principles and has created mandatory minimum sentences in response thereto. We want to denounce and we want society to develop safer environments for everybody.

There is a quote from an important Supreme Court of Canada decision, *R. v. Proulx*, from 2000, which is, “the need for denunciation or deterrence is so pressing that incarceration will be the only suitable way in which to express society's condemnation of the offender's conduct or to deter similar conduct in the future.”

This is the principle that has guided Parliament over many years to introduce mandatory minimum penalties and, as previous speakers have said, it is a mystery to us why they would now want to reduce that.

We recognize that prison is not right for all people and for all situations. The Conservatives believe that those struggling with addictions should get the help they need, treatment for their addictions rather than prison. In the 2021 federal election, Conservatives put forward in their platform a plan to create 1,000 drug treatment beds, to create 50 recovery community centres and to support local and culturally appropriate addiction treatment.

We recognize that prison is not always the best way forward. We think that people should always be given the hope of recovery, not just reduced harm, not just safe supply and not just safe injection sites, but real long-lasting solutions full of hope for a better life.

● (1955)

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I was very interested in the member's focus on victims of drugs and those who are using drugs.

Does he not feel that being allowing these people who have addictions to come forward without fear is important in order to treat them? This legislation, as well as what is being done in B.C., I think will help lead us to that place. Even family members who see another sick family member who needs treatment at this time are too scared to come forward and to tell anybody that their family member needs help because of fear of being criminally penalized. Removing this, I think, would really help in order to get people the help that they need.

What does the member have to say?

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, the member's comments are well thought out and sensitive to the needs of many people. Bill C-5 eliminates mandatory minimum penalties for very, very serious crimes. That is the objection I have to this legislation.

I believe that addiction should be, in certain circumstances, treated as a health issue, rather than a criminal issue, but that is not what we are talking about today. We are talking about drug traffickers. We are talking about people who are trafficking in guns. We are talking about people who are in gangs. We are talking about people in my home community of metro Vancouver who are using guns out on the streets, out in the public, in places where my grandchildren go. That is unacceptable.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague and I work together on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, notably on the gun control file.

Every time I hear my Conservative colleagues ask questions about Bill C-5 in question period, I hear the Minister of Public Safety respond with something about Bill C-21. I find that somewhat unfortunate because they are not the same thing.

Although I quite like my colleague, we both know that our opinions differ on this subject. For example, the Bloc members are big believers in rehabilitation and social reintegration. I think that Bill C-5 will help with that.

However, I think my colleague will agree with me that this is not the time to be introducing this bill, given the rise in gun crime across the country. We are trying to find ways to combat that situation.

What message does my colleague think is being sent to the public by introducing this bill at this time?

[*English*]

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, I do enjoy working with the member at the public safety committee. We, the whole committee, have done some very good and important work together. We have put out some pretty good studies, including the one on guns and gangs. I hope that leads to further legislation and policies to be considered by this Parliament. Bill C-5 is not one of them. I do not think that Bill C-5 accomplishes what the government says is the stated purpose of reducing or responding to the overpopulation of indigenous people and people of colour in our prison system.

### *Government Orders*

In one of our earlier studies, we also talked a lot about indigenous policing. That, to me, is a much better government response to the problem of overpopulation of indigenous people in our prisons.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, one of the reasons why I believe in repealing mandatory minimum penalties is that it is one of the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. While there is a lot of talk of following through on these calls to action, we need more follow through. Call number 32 specifically calls upon the federal government to amend the Criminal Code to allow trial judges to depart from mandatory minimum sentences and the restriction on the use of conditional sentences as well.

I know the member for Langley—Aldergrove is mindful of hearing the priorities of indigenous peoples in this place. I would like to hear his reflections on that.

• (2000)

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, I have an indigenous community in my riding and I have developed a very good relationship with them. I have been advocating for a government response to the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the ones that are important to them, particularly relating to residential schools. I think that the Gladue principles are very important. Judges need to be educated on them and to apply those principles to make sure there is justice for indigenous people.

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I rise in this House today to speak to Bill C-5, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

I have listened to voices on all sides of this House, from members whom I have known and worked with, and I hear a conflicting difference in the connection between crime and sentencing, crime and punishment as Fyodor Dostoevsky would say.

I hear from some friends and colleagues in this House that there is no connection between longer, mandated prison sentences and the rate of recidivism in society and the rate of crime increasing in Canada. I hear the other side that clearly illustrates the connection between the length of time mandated for a specific crime and the reduction in criminal offences of that nature.

Further, I have listened to the government speakers on the legislation and I hear a familiar refrain from those on the government bench, as in all things, that this bill will let society have its cake and eat it too at the same time, as in there are no real choices to make here. But there are real choices.

Somewhere in this sea of data and information, there is obvious narrative, all of which cannot be completely factual. That is that all these facts cannot live in the same narrative.

I will deviate a little here because I have seen this much from the Attorney General of Canada playing fast and loose with the facts and trying to make the facts fit his narrative when examination clearly shows the insincerity of his statements.

### *Government Orders*

With this cacophony of facts, statements, theories and postulations, and yes, misstatements, I took the liberty of examining my own pre-established beliefs in the connection between crime and punishment.

Life is a good teacher. I remember a time in our history when society was less safe. Murders were more common. Criminal activity was growing. There were parts of our cities across North America where people ventured at their own peril.

Some brave politicians in the United States started implementing a program known as “broken windows” at the time. In short, if we prosecute small crimes to the utmost, the perpetrators understand the consequences of crime and do not drift into more serious crimes. The effect over the years was a reduction of crime in the cities. Places became safe again. People moved back downtown in large cities. Social problems abated. People knew where they stood in the eyes of the law again.

We are far from that in our current society. In fact, we are moving quickly in the opposite direction. I walk to work and it is obvious over the past two and a half years that there is more crime on the streets of Ottawa and on the streets of Calgary.

We can go over the statistics, but at this point, they are redundant. The connection between the proliferation of severe drug abuse and street crime is clear, as is the increase in mental health problems among those at-risk people.

However, the government wants the criminals who have preyed on these poor people in our society, pushing more of them onto the street and outside of the care they require, pushing them further toward the final outcome that the proliferation of drugs, like fentanyl, lead to, which is untimely death, to receive lighter sentences.

I try and resolve these clear inconsistencies being offered by various narrative constructors on all sides. I think it is healthy to overcome what might be confirmation bias, which is something I used to deal with in my previous profession, and that is the propensity to accept data that confirms one's own preconceived opinions on any given matter.

The source of data I found to be instructive was from Public Safety Canada and the report entitled “2019 Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview”. I used the government's own source to determine which information was fact, as we know it, and which is narrative fiction.

The report clearly shows that Canada's federal incarceration rate declined from 2009 to 2019 from 117 people per 100,000 Canadians in 2009, down to 107 people per 100,000 Canadians in 2019. That is a 9% reduction over a decade. There are many other touch-points and I know that correlation and causation are not necessarily the same thing, but something clearly was going right during the period where mandatory minimums were enforced.

I like to believe I am a rational thinker and the notion of what drives people to the choice of criminal activity as a means to earn a living is, like all things, a measure of pros and cons. I will reference the common phrase of do not do the crime if one cannot do the time.

● (2005)

When the assessment of return, with the proliferation of a misery that is a trait of the trade in hard drugs, is greater than the assessed cost of being caught in that trade, the logical choice, outside of absolute shame, is to make that calculation. They make millions of dollars illegally and visit absolute misery upon society's most vulnerable with an assessed chance of imprisonment of, say, 20%. That is one in five perpetrators of this death and destruction will get caught and serve time for committing that crime.

That punishment had better suit that crime. The calculation of risk versus return needs to be very punitive. In contradiction to my colleagues who have spoken in favour of lowering sentences, the cost needs to include the shame of being removed from loved ones and communities. These crimes impact our society significantly. There should be no free pass for the consequences, particularly when those consequences are so unequally shared by our Canadian society. We cannot normalize crime.

What are these costs? They are addiction, rehabilitation, property crime, violent crime and death, and the dismantling of the social contract that binds us as a society to take care of each other. Removing these consequences for tearing down society will accelerate dire outcomes.

Now, let us address the inequities the government hangs its virtue hat on in every speech it gives about this bill, which is that Canadians of certain ethnicities are over-represented in our prisons. That fact is true, sadly, and it bears out in the statistics. It is not getting better. Let us revisit my previous comments on what drives rational people to attempt to profit from criminal activity, which is an assessment that the return is higher than the risk. Crime is a big business. Where do criminal organizations, those making millions moving fentanyl and other destructive drugs through our cities, get their foot soldiers?

I looked at a study, an American study, that examined factors correlating with recidivism. The clear correlation with lower recidivism was education level. This legislation will tilt the scales back towards forcing Canadians in marginalized communities to make choices early in life that would remove their future opportunities. It is doing exactly the opposite of what the government seems to pretend it is intended to do.

I also want to draw upon clear data, and that is that crime committed by Canadians in minority communities is inordinately committed against Canadians in their own communities. Sadly, crime is a local activity. Thus, the legislation reduces the legitimacy of the victims in those minority Canadian communities in the eyes of the law. If we were tilting the law to avoid incarceration from certain minorities, we are penalizing those same minority Canadians who no longer have the same legal protection as other Canadians. It is discrimination, and it will lead to more unequal outcomes in society. Surely we could do better.

*Government Orders*

Lastly, I will comment on the ability of judges to interpret what minimum sentences should be delivered. Judges are human beings who bring their own outlooks and emotions to their job. They are not perfect. They are not social workers. Having appeared in court and having heard judges at committee here in Parliament, I am certain the outcomes they decide are also imperfect. We have an imperfect judicial system, but perhaps it is less imperfect than other judicial systems. Let us not make the perfect the enemy of the good, as we say.

That being said, we need to recognize the limits of what we expect judges to do. As much as they believe they could decide all matters, it is our job as parliamentarians to clearly decide for society what are the consequences of certain crimes. We will hear examples where mandatory sentences are absurd. All rules have exceptions. There is already much leeway in sentencing for crimes before our judiciary. Let us not put them in a position where they are responsible for the societal outcomes for which we, as parliamentarians, are responsible.

This is an attempt by some of my colleagues to delegate their responsibilities to appointed judges. I would ask them why. Society, which is made up of our constituents, has elected us to decide these issues, and as the pendulum of issues swings, we will see again that Canadians will demand their cities and communities to be safe. They will demand it from their elected representatives, who are responsible. We cannot delegate this responsibility.

I know where my constituents stand on this issue. I know the clarity I have heard in meetings I have had with citizens in communities as they have seen the significant rise in crime. Mandatory minimum determination is our job. Let us not dumb down Parliament by delegating this important function to others. We are responsible.

● (2010)

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague's speech was really fascinating and it triggered a memory of mine of Michael Sheehan's book, *Crush the Cell: How to Defeat Terrorism Without Terrorizing Ourselves*. That book talks about an aspect of cleaning up crime in New York. When they went after the subways and cleaned up the graffiti and cleaned up those lower crimes, that lowered crime writ large.

Could the member please explain just a bit more about the broken windows theory and the idea that it is important to nip this in the bud right away and deal with criminals at that early stage before they escalate to more violent crimes?

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Madam Speaker, my colleague is right. I remember, decades ago, going to New York City, the city he refers to, which is where people first implemented the broken windows theory. With the crime in the street, the city was unsafe. Walking around, I saw there was crime everywhere.

A new mayor came in and said they needed to start taking care of the broken windows, so the theory followed that he basically started enforcing against small crime, such as breaking windows, graffiti and getting involved with gangs. When people are recruited at young ages, once they get older, they continue in that realm of activity. That is what was nipped in the bud.

When they say, "Stop here", it stops and they no longer have people progressing through criminal organizations. It worked. New York became a beautiful city to visit. It had a whole bunch of tourism opportunities, in addition to the other activities that were there. I thank the member again for that, and I hope we can talk about that further.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. As my colleague already said, the issue is with when this bill was introduced. There is an increase in gun crimes. Yesterday we learned that 173 women and girls were killed in Canada in 2021 alone. That is a lot.

People are conflating Bill C-21, which has to do with firearms, with this one. They are conflating serious gun crimes with simple drug possession. They are conflating everything and making questionable associations. There is an important distinction between these two bills and between gun crimes and the simple possession of drugs. This needs to be simplified. The timing of this bill is strange, however.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. My comments were about crimes related to drug use, but there are also gun crimes that are important in the bill.

The other bill she mentioned is a firearms bill. I think people with legal firearms are targeted most of the time. We will see if that is a problem. Unfortunately, gun crimes are committed against women. If those firearms are illegal, I think we need to tackle illegal arms trafficking in Canadian society.

● (2015)

[English]

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member brought a lot of dignity to the conversation, and I really appreciate that. I wonder if the member could comment quickly about the issue around the Court of Appeal for Ontario upholding a ruling that struck down the mandatory minimum of five years imprisonment for subsection 286.3(2) of the Criminal Code as being inconsistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I wonder if the member could comment on that specific situation.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Madam Speaker, there are a lot of courts of appeal that strike down laws in Canada, and we have to look at where the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is. Actually, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is expressed in the Ontario Court of Appeal. I apologize to my colleague because I am not sure where this stands in the appeal process from the Ontario Court of Appeal to potentially the Supreme Court of Canada.

However, it is one of those things where different courts of appeal do have certain rights to say something is contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and then of course it goes up to the higher court of appeal, which is the Supreme Court of Canada. I apologize that I cannot give the member more detail on it at this point, being unfamiliar with where it is in the process.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to join the debate this evening, and I think I will be bringing it home before we move on to the other piece of government legislation we are going to discuss.

Bill C-5 is problematic for a number of reasons, and I am going to articulate why I will not be able to support this bill. We have heard a lot of rationales presented by members on the government benches as to why this bill is compassionate, why they believe it is important that this needs to be done and why it is urgent that it be done now.

I would note that this bill was progressing through the House in its previous form in the last Parliament, and during that Parliament the Prime Minister and members of this place undertook not to call an election during the pandemic. However, politics being politics, the Prime Minister saw that the polls seemed favourable for his party's electoral fortunes, called an election and killed the bill.

Now we are back, and I guess it is urgent once more. The Liberals believe that, but it was not in the intervening period.

Let us talk about what the bill really would do. I want to address some of the arguments made in favour of it by the bill's proponents. One of those arguments is that eliminating mandatory prison time for some of these offences would help racialized Canadians and minorities who are disproportionately affected and over-represented in the justice system, so the Liberals are going to eliminate the MMPs for those individuals.

That is what they say Bill C-5 would do. In about 12 minutes we are going to debating Bill C-21, so let us talk about what Bill C-5 would do and what Bill C-21 would do.

Bill C-5 would remove the mandatory prison time for possession of a weapon obtained by the commission of an offence, so there would be no minimum. Bill C-21 would increase the maximum. Bill C-5 would remove the minimum penalty for weapons trafficking, while Bill C-21 would increase the maximum amount of time. For possession for the purpose of weapons trafficking, Bill C-5 would eliminate the minimum penalty, and Bill C-21, as members guessed it, would increase the maximum penalty. The same is true for importing or exporting a weapon, knowing it is unauthorized. The bills would remove the MMP and increase the maximum.

If the contention by the government is that it would be removing the minimum penalty because the folks who are being convicted of these offences are racialized Canadians and they are disproportionately represented in the justice system, why is it that the government wants to increase the maximum penalty?

There seems to be a bit of mental gymnastics happening for the Liberals to put forward these two pieces of legislation, which we are going to be debating in the House literally minutes apart.

We have talked about the opioid crisis in recent days in this place, and we talked about it today. It is a scourge in our country. People are dying every day, and the perpetrators, the dealers of this poison, who are preying on people in all of our communities, should know that what they are doing will carry the harshest penalties in our justice system. They are not the victims.

Bill C-5 would eliminate mandatory prison time for trafficking or possession for the purpose of trafficking, importing and exporting or possession for the purpose of exporting, and production of a schedule 1 or 2 substance. Schedule 1 and 2 include heroin, cocaine, fentanyl and crystal meth.

● (2020)

I have heard conflation regarding this bill and the government's work with the Province of British Columbia to decriminalize what they call "simple possession" of those same substances. When we talk about fentanyl and carfentanil, two and a half grams is considered personal possession. That is enough to kill 1,000 people. That is 1,000 lethal doses.

Yesterday at the health committee, we heard Canada's chief public health officer say that if there is an overdose at a party or someone is carrying two and a half grams of carfentanil or fentanyl, the first step would be to administer naloxone, or Narcan. I do not know what the situation is like in British Columbia with respect to its emergency service preparedness for overdoses, but I do not know of a lot of fire or police departments or public health agencies that have 1,000 Narcan kits on hand. That is incredibly troubling.

This bill also talks about the expansion of conditional sentencing. This is where someone who is found guilty of an offence is able to serve their sentence in the community. The first thing I would draw to the attention of members in this place is bizarre, to put it gently. Someone would be eligible for conditional sentences, which means not serving their sentence in jail, if they are found guilty of prison breach. Therefore, when they break out of jail, the judge will say that it would be more appropriate for them to serve their sentence in the community. It is absurd.

To move from the absurd to the serious, I note offences such as sexual assault, kidnapping, trafficking in persons for a material benefit and abduction of a person under the age of 14. Someone found guilty of these offences would be eligible to serve their sentence in the community where they perpetrated the offence on their victims. They could be in the house right next door. That is not justice. We need to concern ourselves very much with the effects this legislation would have on the victims. This country needs to take an approach where the lens we put on everything we do has victims in mind. These perpetrators are not the victims.

Consider offences such as assaulting a peace officer causing bodily harm or with a weapon. Of course, we can go back to trafficking in or exporting and importing schedule III drugs. After putting poison in our communities, someone can serve their sentence in the community they were poisoning.

We have also heard about diversion for people who have simple possession for personal use of drugs and are struggling with addiction issues. We should have legislation in the House with a comprehensive approach for treatment in every single one of the provinces. The Prime Minister, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Justice should be working with the provinces every single day to come up with a framework for a national strategy on treatment. Right now, there are no Crown prosecutors bringing people before the courts for simple possession. There has already been a directive given by the prosecution service for that not to happen.

This bill is deeply flawed, and there are a number of ways we could work together in the House to make sure we are standing up for victims and make sure we are addressing those who are struggling with addiction. That is what I would like to turn my attention to and I will not be supporting this legislation.

● (2025)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** It being 8:26 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

[Translation]

The question is on Motion No. 2. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 3 to 5.

[English]

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

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the division stands deferred until Monday, June 13, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions. The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 3 to 5.

\* \* \*

### CRIMINAL CODE

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-21, An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is an honour to have the opportunity to commence debate on Bill C-21, which is a bill that represents a culmination of the advocacy, effort and leadership of so many people, most especially the Canadians who have been profoundly impacted by gun violence.

I cannot bring enough humility to this chamber and to this speech to convey my gratitude to them and indeed to everyone who has contributed to a law that we believe, on the government side,

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represents a significant stride and an important step. It is probably the most important step we have taken with regard to gun law policy reform in a generation.

I want to bring the chamber's attention to a number of individuals whom I had the privilege of getting to know in the journey leading to this debate.

These are good people like Ken Price and Claire Smith, whose daughter Samantha was injured in the Danforth shooting tragedy in my hometown, and people like Nick Beaton, who lost his pregnant wife in the Portapique and Truro shooting in Nova Scotia.

[Translation]

I met people from Quebec, such as Imam Boufeldja Benabdallah of the Quebec mosque and Nathalie Provost, an incredibly inspiring survivor of the Polytechnique shooting in Montreal.

● (2030)

[English]

Most recently, I met Eileen Mohan, who lost her son about 15 years ago. He was only a young boy. It is an innocent life gone, snuffed out in the crossfire in British Columbia. He is one of the Surrey Six.

When I met Eileen about a week ago, she said to me, and I will never forget the look in her eye, that she was proud. She had waited 15 years for the government to put forward legislation that would do the things we are proposing to do so that no other mom, no other parent and no other person would have to lose a loved one like she did.

There is really no way to articulate that sense of loss, that anguish, in the conversations I have. It is indescribable, and perhaps the single most important motivation for me, and I genuinely hope for all members in the chamber, is ensuring that we do better by them by passing this law.

This has been exceedingly difficult, I have to say. I see the patience that these survivors have exhibited. It is as though, since the moment they lost the person who mattered to them or the moment they were directly impacted by gun violence, they have been climbing a mountain that is as high as one can imagine, and the elements are throwing everything at them: snow, rain, wind, boulders and avalanches. These are obstacles, and despite all of it, they have persevered and fought hard.

I just want to impress upon everyone here and all Canadians that this is why we are here. We are here for them. We can never forget that.

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The imperative has only increased over the past number of years for us to take additional steps to revisit not only our gun laws, but also our entire strategy when it comes to fighting gun violence. A Statistics Canada report issued a little less than two weeks ago really shone a light on the extent of the problem. Gun violence is up 81% since 2009. Gun homicides are up. Handgun violence, specifically, is up, and this is the number one type of gun used in homicides. Alarming, domestic violence, intimate-partner violence and gender-based violence are all up in connection with the presence of guns and gun violence. This just goes to show that wherever one comes from in this debate, no matter what one's perspective is, there must be one thing that unites all of us, and that is the need to do more.

Bill C-21 represents the culmination of the advice we have received from so many constituencies, including from survivors and many others, which I will come to momentarily, to take that additional step to do better. We have had the occasion to start to explain the provisions in Bill C-21, and I will take the next few moments to give additional details on how those provisions would attack, very specifically, the issues that are so pernicious and so prevalent across communities in our country.

First and foremost, Bill C-21 would introduce a national freeze on handguns for the first time. In very clear language, this means that on a go-forward basis no one would be able to buy, sell, transfer or import a handgun. There would be limited exceptions for law enforcement and for those who work within the security industry, and there would be limited exceptions for those who compete in international competitions on behalf of Canada and the like. Beyond that, we would cap the market and stop the trend of a universe of classification of guns and handguns that has grown, on average, by about 45,000 to 55,000 new registrations every year. Members can imagine how quickly and how significantly the domain of handguns is growing within Canada.

It is no coincidence, in my opinion, that as the universe of those handguns has grown, so has the prevalence of handguns in the commission of serious violent offences, leading all the way to murder: to homicide. As a result of that, we are stopping that trend. That is one of the main centrepieces of the bill.

The last thing I will say about the priority and urgency that underlines this particular moment in time is that, since the government has stated its intention to pass Bill C-21 into law, we have seen a spike in the number of handgun sales across the country. This is something that the government was prepared for and was alive to, which is why, in addition to tabling Bill C-21, we also simultaneously put on the floor of the House of Commons regulations that would be modified under the Firearms Act so that we could more quickly bring in the effect of the national handgun freeze to stop the growth of that particular universe of guns. Again, these are increasingly being used in the commission of criminal offences leading up to homicide.

● (2035)

Earlier today, a number of MPs who caucus with the government at the Standing Committee on Public Security and National Security brought a motion with the hopes of achieving unanimity that we could more quickly bring in changes to the regulations under the

Firearms Act, so that we could more quickly bring in the national handgun freeze and the effect of it. We did not get consensus at committee, unfortunately, and this is part of a sustained pattern that we have seen from the Conservative Party of Canada of an effort to obstruct debate.

In fact, this debate was supposed to start last Friday. I was right here in my chair after question period hoping to kick-start second reading, but instead we saw a flood of concurrence motions in a very deliberate effort to postpone the debate of Bill C-21. I am grateful that we are now finally commencing this debate, but let there be no more of it. Let us get on with it. We need to read and debate the bill.

The introduction of a national handgun freeze is the first thing. The second thing is that Bill C-21 will take on, in a very intentional and direct way, organized crime. It does this by first and foremost raising maximum sentences for illegal gun smugglers and traffickers at the border, from 10 years to 15 years. What is the effect of that statement of intent? It is to send a very powerful and clear message to anyone who is in the business of illegal gun smuggling that they are at greater risk of facing stiffer sentences. It is entirely appropriate, given the alarming trends that I have already alluded to and given the concerning report of Statistics Canada that shows that gun violence in various categories is on the rise and has been on the rise for some time.

In addition to that, and in consultation with law enforcement and provincial and territorial partners, we are also granting new investigatory powers to police by adding to the eligible offences under the Criminal Code under the specific category of firearms offences—

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

● (2040)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I hope the hon. member will let the minister finish his speech without interrupting.

The hon. minister.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, as I was saying, Bill C-21 would also grant new investigatory powers by expanding the list of eligible firearms offences so that police can obtain wiretaps. Having worked in the criminal justice system and having worked as a federal prosecutor, I can attest to the fact that wiretap surveillance does allow law enforcement to interdict and to prevent crime before it occurs. By adding these powers, we are sending not only a clear message that if people are going to traffic guns illegally, they are going to face stiffer sentences and we are going to equip police with additional powers to stop them.

That is the second thing I wanted to highlight. The third thing I want to highlight is that we need to stop, once and for all, a simultaneous trend. We are seeing gender-based violence in our workplaces, communities, homes or wherever online. There is a trend between gender-based violence and guns. Between 2013 and 2019, the incidents involving gender-based violence and guns went up more than 30%, and that trend has continued.

What Bill C-21 would do, among other things, is introduce red flag laws. Red flag laws allow anybody to go to court to ask a judge to seize the gun or suspend the licence of a person who owns a gun if they pose a threat to anyone else or themselves.

[*Translation*]

This is a practical and effective tool that can reverse a negative trend by providing another protective mechanism. On the advice of organizations representing women and survivors, we added an amendment to the red flag laws to protect the identity of the person asking the court to apply this mechanism. This is one example of the work we are doing with communities affected by gun violence.

[*English*]

In Bill C-21, we also introduce yellow flag laws that would limit the discretion of authorities by requiring the automatic revocation of the gun licence of anybody who was subject to a restraining order or would be subject to a restraining order in the future. There, too, we listened very carefully to the groups that we engaged with in the formulation of Bill C-21.

There are a lot of other things that this bill does. There are some very specific provisions that would deal with the use of replica guns. These pose a significant threat, particularly for law enforcement who, when they are responding to gun calls, find it exceedingly difficult to distinguish between a real gun and a replica gun.

There are provisions that deal with the glorification of gun violence. I am sure that all members are concerned about the very targeted and concerted effort to make guns seem unserious, and to make guns seem like they could be abused recklessly by children and young people. No one should glorify violence. There are provisions within Bill C-21 that deal with that, as well.

As we looked at the various provisions we could introduce into Bill C-21, we consulted extensively. As I have said, we spoke with survivors' groups, women's groups and advocates: those who stand up for the rights of victims. We took their advice into very careful consideration. It is my sincere belief that as a result of those conversations, they would now see that advice reflected in the text of this bill.

We listened very carefully to law enforcement, particularly on the provisions that relate to illegal gun smuggling and deterring gun crime, and to providing additional authorities to them so that they could do their jobs by providing them with the tools they need. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has indicated that Bill C-21 would be a step in the right direction towards protecting our communities.

It is for that reason that I believe Bill C-21 enjoys the broad support of so many Canadians. It is not only those constituencies, but also big city mayors and rural mayors, with whom I met last week

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in Saskatchewan, who have come out in favour and said they supported Bill C-21.

It is my hope that we will study this bill with the urgency and the seriousness that it requires. It also has to be said that Bill C-21 has to be seen in the broader context of everything else that the government is doing, including introducing a national ban on AR-15s, which are assault-style rifles that have no place in our communities; taking the next steps that are necessary to introduce a mandatory buyback program, to get those guns out of our communities for good; following through with Bill C-71 to ensure that there are appropriate background checks, so that guns do not fall into the hands of the wrong people; and rolling out more quickly the \$250-million building safer communities fund, so that we can address the root causes and social determinants of gun crime.

We need to do this as quickly as possible because of those survivors I referred to at the beginning of my remarks tonight. They are still climbing that mountain. They are still fighting their way to the top. It is a long journey, but the government is going to be there with them every step of the way. Bill C-21 is a very significant step in that direction. I hope that all members, after careful consideration, will support this bill. It is the right thing to do. It is how we will eradicate gun violence and protect all Canadians.

• (2045)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his thoughtful remarks.

He mentioned, on a number of occasions in his speech, that the government is increasing maximum penalties to send a message to criminals who commit firearms offences. Again, there is this idea “to send a message, we are increasing the penalties”.

At the same time, the minister's government is also sending the message that it is eliminating mandatory prison time for serious firearms offences, such as firing a firearm with the intent to injure: That is shooting a gun at someone with the intent to shoot them with a bullet, robbing someone at gunpoint, extortion with a firearm, and using a firearm in the commission of a crime. These are all very serious, deadly gun crimes. The government is sending the message that criminals may not go to prison if they do that. They could actually serve house arrest in the community they terrorized.

I am not quite sure, but I feel there are a lot of mixed signals that he is trying to send to criminals here. Could he perhaps clarify?

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**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, I think my colleague will know I carry no truck for criminals and I carry no truck for individuals who would use guns to do harm to the community or to individuals whatsoever. However, the fact of the matter is that, before she became a member of Parliament, the last time the Conservative Party had the reins of government, there was a failed and prosecuted agenda around sentence reforms that simply did not work. The Supreme Court of Canada repeatedly struck down those failed policies that were introduced under the Conservative government, which is why my hon. colleague, the Minister of Justice, has put forward Bill C-5.

Members can reconcile that with what we are doing in Bill C-21, which will ensure that the judiciary, in whom we have respect, trust and confidence, can dispense justice. By raising maximum sentences from 10 to 14 years, we would be sending the very clear and unambiguous signal that if someone is going to illegally traffic across a border or in our communities illegal firearms, they will face stiffer sentences.

• (2050)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech. I am very pleased that we are finally starting this debate on Bill C-21. I have a question about how to proceed and I would like to hear the minister's answer.

At the press conference announcing Bill C-21, it seemed pretty clear that a freeze on handguns was part of it. We later realized that this could be done by regulation.

It seems to me that the government did not anticipate the fact that these regulations, which would not come into force immediately, would lead to a spike or an explosion in handgun sales in the country. Now that the government has realized this, it is trying to put out the fire and get the regulations through more quickly, for example by moving a motion in the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security today and perhaps adopting a motion in the House later to speed up the process, which I think is good. The intent of the bill was to reduce the number of firearms in circulation, but now that number is increasing because people are allowed to go out and buy more.

I am wondering what other ways could have been used. I also wonder why the Liberals decided to proceed with a freeze and regulation instead of a ban, as they did with the May 1, 2020, regulations on assault-style firearms.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, I want to make it very clear that I am very impatient. I am anxious to not only introduce this national freeze on handguns, but also to implement it. That is precisely why we support the Bloc's efforts. If the Bloc members want to move a motion to pass the regulatory changes that can implement the effects of the freeze, the government will be there. That is what I am saying to my Bloc colleagues.

We are not the problem. Quite frankly, the Conservatives are the ones blocking this. We have seen them doing this kind of thing before. The bickering needs to stop so we can move forward with the debate. At least we have started it tonight. However, we need to

move forward with this bill to get the national freeze on handguns passed.

[*English*]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I know the minister is approaching this issue from a very personal position, and I appreciate that, but I think we have to be very clear. I think the minister would agree with me that Bill C-21 by itself is not going to solve the very complex problem of gun crime. It is going to require a whole host of measures working together.

At the public safety committee, our first study in this Parliament was on gun and gang violence, and witness after witness was correlating the rise in gun crime with the drug trade. The government, just a few short weeks ago, did vote against Bill C-216, which would have decriminalized personal possession, set up a national strategy and set up expungement. I do not want to get into a debate about that, but I think the onus is now on the Government of Canada to explain what its next steps will be to address the incredibly high profit margins that exist in the drug trade that are driving the violence in big cities like Toronto and Vancouver.

It is the highly addictive nature of fentanyl and carfentanil and the massive profit margins that are leading to gangs competing with one another for that turf. That is driving a lot of the gun violence. In the absence of supporting Bill C-216, can the minister tell us what the next steps are to address that very specific problem?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my hon. colleague for really highlighting one of the complexities that confronts us in our effort to make our communities safer, whether they are dealing with gun violence or they are dealing with the violence that is driven by organized crime in the illegal drug trade. I believe my hon. colleague would agree it is important that we disentangle those who find themselves in front of the criminal law by virtue of substance abuse and mental health issues through substance use from those other individuals who, with no care or regard whatsoever for public safety or for our communities, go out and, again, for pure commercial purposes and for greed, visit incredible public harm on them. That is why we are taking an approach, first and foremost, of working with his home province of British Columbia to address the substance abuse challenge with the pilot project with the B.C. government.

However, when it comes to interdicting drug trafficking crime by organized crime that is commingled with gun crime, Bill C-21 would raise maximum sentences and also provide police with additional powers.

I will just say one thing very quickly in closing. My colleague is absolutely right. Bill C-21 by itself is not a foolproof guarantee. We have to take a look at this in the broader context of a comprehensive strategy, as I explained in my remarks.

• (2055)

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the minister talked about statistics and data, so I have a simple question about the facts and the data that I am sure the minister had before he brought this legislation forward.

Considering that all legal handguns in Canada are restricted and registered, and we know statistically that law-abiding firearms owners are the most law-abiding demographic in Canada, I would like the minister to tell the House, out of all handgun crimes committed since 2015, how many were committed with legal handguns. I would note that I asked his officials the same question last week, with the reassurance they were going to provide that data to the minister, so I am expecting an answer tonight.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, my colleague's question does allow me to highlight the fact that even though some guns, many guns in fact, are legally purchased and possessed by law-abiding owners for whom we have the utmost respect, those guns can be stolen. Handguns have been stolen and assault-style rifles have been stolen and subsequently used in the commission of offences.

I would also point out that one of the challenges around the issue of introducing evidence is traceability. That is why what Bill C-21 would do, in conjunction with additional investments in budget 2022, is give more tools and resources to law enforcement and to the CBSA so that we can better trace the source of guns. That is something I would hope my hon. colleague would support. It is a common-sense measure and it is a way in which we can ensure justice.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am very honoured to put words on the record concerning Bill C-21.

We have a very serious gun violence problem in the country, one that Conservatives across the country are deeply concerned about. I have to say that when there were rumours that this announcement from the Liberals was coming forward and it was going to be a big splashy event at the Château Laurier here in downtown Ottawa, I was looking forward to hearing something that could really make a meaningful impact on this devastating issue that has ripped families apart and taken innocent lives. However, I was left feeling deeply, deeply disappointed. It was a missed opportunity to provide real hope for Canadians that gun violence would go down.

What is interesting is that since the Prime Minister formed government seven years ago, gun violence and violent crime in Canada has consistently gone up. It has never been so bad since I have been alive when it comes to the gun statistics in this country and those killing each other with guns in Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Vancouver. It is a serious, serious issue. That is why I felt so let down by the government's announcement, because it will not make any meaningful impact on gun violence and we so desperately needed a meaningful announcement.

I am going to mention a couple of crime statistics, because they are very alarming. Homicide rates went up 7% from last year. That is a consistent increase, year over year over year, 7% more from last year, so now two out of 100,000 Canadians are victims of a homicide. Violent crime, again, is up 5% in the last six years.

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Firearm-related offences increased for the sixth year in a row. These are stats from last year, so we will see what they are this year, but from the police reports, it sounds like it is going to be one of the worst years on record. Homicides are at a 30-year high and at least a third of them are committed with firearms.

I represent a riding in Winnipeg. It is ranked the violent crime capital of Canada, frankly, year over year, so I know first-hand the devastation that gun crime and violent crime cause in communities, especially our vulnerable communities.

In fact, in Toronto, in 2014, before the Prime Minister came to office, there were 177 instances where firearms were shot illegally. Now that number is up to 462. It has gone from 177 to 462 in Toronto. Clearly, the Liberal approach is a resounding failure when it comes to keeping our communities safe. It is a fact that our communities are less safe. Canadians are less safe since the Prime Minister took office. Again, the Liberals had the opportunity to address that at their announcement, but they failed to do so.

In Winnipeg we have serious concerns. Winnipeg's North End is a predominantly indigenous community that suffers significantly with addictions, homicides, violent crimes, domestic abuse, spousal abuse, child abuse. In fact, in Manitoba, child and family services remove the most children per capita than anywhere else in the world, and at least 90% to 97% of them are indigenous. Our prisons at all levels are filled with indigenous youth. It is a serious problem that we are facing in this country.

We have also the missing and murdered indigenous women. Indigenous women in Manitoba are most impacted by those horrendous statistics, and yet we have Bill C-5 from the government. On one hand, the minister said in his speech that he is increasing maximum penalties for firearm offences, some of them, to send a message to criminals, while on the other hand, his colleague is eliminating mandatory prison time for serious firearm offences.

We are talking about robbery with a firearm. If a person robs someone at gunpoint, there is no guarantee that person is going to prison now. The individual may actually get to serve house arrest in the community where the person caused the violent crime. Extortion with a firearm and firing a firearm with the intent to injure someone, that is, shooting at someone and planning to hit them with the bullet, no longer results in mandatory prison time under the Liberal government. There is using a firearm in committing a crime, and I could go on. In fact, someone who is a drug trafficker will no longer face mandatory prison time under Bill C-5.

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On one hand, the Liberals say they are getting tough on criminals. On the other hand, they are letting them completely off the hook, allowing them to serve, perhaps, house arrest in the communities they have terrorized.

There is the removal of the mandatory prison time for drug trafficking, which is deeply related, as my NDP colleague referred to in his question, to gun violence in the country. Just last year, over 7,000 Canadians died from drug overdoses, mostly opioids, that is, fentanyl, carfentanil. It was more deadly for young people to die from a drug overdose than COVID. That is how serious the drug epidemic in this country is.

We all have different approaches on how to solve that, but I would say that removing mandatory prison time for the individuals who push drugs on vulnerable Canadians, who traffic drugs into this country, is the wrong approach.

• (2100)

They are responsible for murdering thousands of Canadians, especially in B.C. It is especially an issue with young people, so the government's approach to firearms and violent crime, despite the rise in statistics, does not make sense.

Then we have the government bringing forward this handgun freeze. The minister has consistently said that we are stopping this trend with the handgun freeze, but we know that the handguns used in Toronto gang crimes are not from legal gun owners. They are smuggled in from the United States, and I will get to that.

What I think is particularly interesting is all the individuals, particularly police, who have come out to say that handgun bans and buybacks will not work. They will not work to address the rising gun violence in this country.

In fact, I will start with an interesting quote here by an individual who said, "The long-gun registry, as it was, was a failure.... There are better ways of keeping us safe than that registry which...has been removed." We are not talking about the registry today, but it was a gun control mechanism that was brought in formerly by a Liberal government, so I think it is relevant.

This individual said, "I grew up with long guns, rifles and shotguns.... The RCMP guarding me had handguns and I got to play with them every now and then", although the RCMP was "very responsible" around him. He said, "I was raised with an appreciation and an understanding of how important in rural areas and right across the country gun ownership is as a part of the culture of Canada." It was a very important person who said this. He continued, "I do not feel that there's any huge contradiction between keeping our cities safe from gun violence and gangs, and allowing this important facet of Canadian identity which is having a gun."

That was the Prime Minister of Canada, back in 2012 or 2013. Wow, how times have changed.

In reference to a handgun ban, another important individual of the Liberal government said, "I believe that would be potentially a very expensive proposition but just as importantly, it would not in my opinion be perhaps the most effective measure in restricting the access that criminals would have to such weapons, because we'd still have a problem with them being smuggled across the border".

That was the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, the former minister of public safety. Those were his words.

There is also the deputy chief of the Toronto Police Service, Myron Demkiw, who deals with this on the front line and puts his life on the line dealing with criminals shooting guns in downtown Toronto. He and his officers put their lives on the line to keep communities safe from gun violence. In reference to guns, he said, "They're not domestically sourced. They are internationally sourced. Our problem in Toronto is handguns from the United States." I asked him about the handgun ban and the buyback proposed by the government, which is going forward, and he said, "Investing in what you described is certainly not going to deal with the crime problem we're facing in Toronto as it relates to criminal handguns and the use of criminal handguns. We believe an investment upstream is a very valuable focus of resources." When I asked him if we should invest more in police or if we should ban guns, that was his response. Clearly, he does not believe it will be effective, and he is someone at the epicentre of gun violence in this country.

In fact, I have pages and pages of quotes from frontline officers, who deal with this more than anybody else, who have said that bans will not work because they do not tackle the problem.

We recently studied this issue, guns and gangs, at the national security and public safety committee, for which I am the vice-chair. We had a very robust debate. We had police experts. We had crime experts. We had community advocates. Not one recommendation in that report was to ban handguns, because none of the experts, none of the police experts and none of the community anti-gang experts said that that would be a solution. All of them said that that would not work, because we know from the Toronto police that over 85% of the handguns used in violent crimes in Toronto are smuggled in from the United States. This is a serious and growing problem that the government has failed to address.

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I am an MP from Winnipeg. Recently, I took a tour of the Winnipeg police headquarters, where they showed me a half-a-million-dollar drug bust: all these deadly opioids, piles of cash and a very long table with all the firearms they had seized from the gangsters who were responsible. They are making these busts monthly. I took a look at all the guns. They said that, number one, every single gun on that table was already prohibited, not just restricted but prohibited. No one would have been able to legally get those guns in the country, no matter what kind of licence a person had. The second thing they said was that all of them were smuggled in from the United States. Then they showed me a map of the train tracks across North America, major rail lines that went all the way from Mexico, all the way through the central United States, all the way to Winnipeg.

• (2105)

They suspect that a significant number of the drugs and the guns from the United States that are killing Canadians are coming in on rail, so at committee I asked the border agents why they cannot stop it. They said they do not have the capacity, beyond checking one one-millionth, which is effectively none, of the railcars coming into Canada. We also have very little capacity to check marine ports of entry. We are struggling on retention issues at the border. We need many more border officers and much increased and improved technology to stop gun smuggling. All experts agree that this is where the problem is coming from.

The current government has spent more money than any government in history, actually all combined, if we look at deficits. If it really wanted to solve gun violence, it would be dumping billions of dollars into the border to shore up our security, because of course we share the longest undefended border in the world with a country that has more guns than people. Therefore, we have to get real about the Herculean effort it is going to take to stop this problem, which I think every single person in this House agrees we must do.

I am going to talk about police. I mentioned the police. We know that, particularly in rural Canada but in cities as well, the police are struggling to respond to calls. If there is a break and enter in Winnipeg, it may take them a month to come and investigate it because they are so overwhelmed with gun violence and violent crimes. That is how bad it is getting. Do not even get me started on the calls for service in rural Canada. It is unbearable for people in rural Canada.

The answer is that we need far more police and far more investments in guns and gangs units in this country. If we talk to police officers on the front lines, they will say that they are strapped and cannot keep up with demand. Drug and gun deaths are going up and they need more help. Therefore, it is about border security investments and police guns and gangs unit investments. That is what would make a real difference in reducing gun violence, significant investment.

As well, at committee we had a number of remarkable people from the grassroots community in Toronto. One of them, Marcell Wilson, was a hardened criminal who was rehabilitated. He turned his life around and started the One by One Movement. The One by One Movement saves at-risk youth in vulnerable communities from joining a life of gangs and following a life of crime. This man and

his organization are saving young people from this life of crime. There is a similar organization in my community, called the Bear Clan Patrol. It really focuses on Winnipeg's north end, which is dealing with a lot of trauma. There are community organizations like this all across the country. They need significant investment and support from all levels of government. That is a long-term solution for the gun violence we are seeing.

I think there is a lot we can agree on with respect to this. The minister talked about red flag laws, increasing the penalties for those who try to smuggle guns into this country, and a few other minor things that I think all members of this House can agree on, so today, in very good faith, we talked to the other parties and we brought forward the following motion. I was not allowed to read it because I was cut off, but I will read it now into the record. This motion was to be brought forward so we can depoliticize this issue. Conservatives firmly believe, as do nearly all firearms owners in this country, that the current government does not have an interest in solving gun violence but wants to stigmatize and divide Canadians on this issue. Therefore, we wanted to take the politics out of it and say that there are parts of this bill we are really keen on, so we can work together, get them to committee, study them and get them passed. Let us quicken the process and save lives, hopefully, if they are effective, which we will find out at committee. Let us put the really difficult political issues through the debate in the House. This is not something that is foreign. We split bills. That is a possibility. It is a democratic tool that we have.

I wanted to say, before I was cut off by Liberal members, that given that the debate on combatting gun violence needs to be depoliticized and centred on the rights of victims and the safety of communities, the House should call on the government to divide Bill C-21 into two parts to allow for those measures where there is broad support across all parties to proceed separately, namely curbing domestic violence and tackling the flow of guns over the Canada-U.S. border, from those aspects of the bill that divide the House. That is fairly collaborative, I would say.

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● (2110)

I have to say that Liberal, Conservative, Bloc and NDP members on the public safety committee have worked very well together. We really tried to put our politics aside and we came up with a really great guns and gangs study that we all signed on to. Can members imagine all parties signing on to a guns and gangs study? It is unheard of.

That is how we can work together and how I have shown that I can work together with others on this issue to create real solutions. When I attempted to do that in the House today, the Liberals shot it down, so I will take no lessons from them about playing politics with this. We made a good-faith effort today and they shot it down.

I also want to talk about some of the people who are impacted by this ban. The minister said something very odd recently on the news. He said that this bill does not impact law-abiding citizens and it does not impact law-abiding gun owners. I am not sure if he has read his own bill, because this bill, the handgun freeze, impacts only legal owners. It impacts only people who follow the law.

I will remind the House that those who possess RPAL, the restricted licence, need to be trained, vetted and background-checked. They are some of the most background-checked individuals in the country, and with good reason. Conservatives support very strict gun laws in this country. Only the most responsible, law-abiding citizens should ever come near a gun.

We have a situation where those individuals are the only ones being targeted by this. It is not the criminals in Toronto. They do not care. They are laughing about this handgun freeze. They already own them illegally. They are carrying them around and shooting up their communities illegally now. Do members think they care about a handgun freeze? They are laughing; it is ridiculous.

I would like to talk about some of the individuals who are impacted by this, because I think it is pretty important. Some of them are in the sport shooting community. There is a large sport shooting community. For folks who are watching at home, if they do not own a firearm or have never been around one, I understand this is very foreign to them. I understand. I am not a sport shooter myself, so it is not something that necessarily impacts me.

However, it certainly impacts our Olympic sport shooting community, which has thousands and thousands of sport shooters below it: associations, provincial competitions, national competitions, international competitions. This bill would end that sport in Canada, a sport in which we have competed at the Olympic level for well over a hundred years. The Liberals say they have consulted, but I am hearing from the very large, law-abiding sport shooting community that it has not had a call from the minister. The Liberals are not giving any dignity to these individuals, while ripping apart a major part of their cultural heritage in this country without even a conversation.

The Liberals are trying to push this through at committee with no debate, with a sneaky UC motion at committee. They do not even want to debate it. They want to do it today and completely eliminate any dignity from a large part of this country that values sport shooting and is proud of it. These people pass down their firearms to their daughters and sons. That is all eliminated. I just do not un-

derstand how the Liberals can bring forward something like this with no consultation with the community it impacts the most, because it is not impacting the illegal community. It is not impacting the individuals who are killing people in our cities.

If one looks at the crime stats and the trends since the Prime Minister took office, one would think the Liberals would bring forward a bill that would go after the problem, but no, they have chosen politics. They have chosen to go after the individuals who are least likely to commit crimes. Lawful gun owners are actually three times less likely to commit crimes, because they are so vetted and so background-checked, as it should be.

It is infuriating. I cannot tell members how many calls I have received from across the country, from women, educated people, professionals, doctors, pilots and academics who engage in sport shooting. They are asking why they are being attacked again by the government and why the government is not going after the problem. It is spending billions of dollars. The sky is the limit. Why is it not spending it in the cities so we can save people?

It is unbelievable. I can go on and on about this. I am very passionate about it, as I am sure we all are from our own perspectives, but I am willing to work and collaborate on the elements of this bill that we do agree on. That was shot down today, but maybe the Liberals will agree another day.

I would like to move an amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following: "Bill C-21, An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms), be not now read a second time but that the Order be discharged, the Bill withdrawn and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security."

● (2115)

The purpose of my motion is to say we have to go back to the drawing board. This is not going to work. It is not going to solve gun violence. Conservatives will work together on the committee to solve gun violence in this country. We will collaborate and bring forward real solutions to tackle the problem, which is criminals and gangs smuggling guns in from the United States and hurting our communities.

Rest assured.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):**  
The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. Minister of Public Safety.

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**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I first want to thank my colleague for her impassioned speech, but unfortunately, substantial portions of it are just factually inaccurate.

For example, the statistics demonstrated an increase in gun violence that predated our government and occurred in part as a result of the massive and deep cuts to frontline law enforcement that were imposed by the last Conservative government, which this government then proceeded to restore when we first took office in 2015. As a result of the nearly \$1 billion that we put back into the system, we were indeed able to provide additional resources, tools and technology to law enforcement, including in my hon. colleague's hometown of Winnipeg, where she just acknowledged that local police, with the benefit of federal funding—which she acknowledged to me, to her credit, the last time I went to committee—were positive contributing factors to the progress we made in stopping illegal guns from crossing the border.

At a minimum, she should acknowledge that, but the real problem that my colleague and the Conservative Party have on this issue is that they have no plan, no alternative, except for repeatedly stating that they would make assault-style rifles legal again. That has been their stated policy position for quite some time. I am simply stating what has been well known publicly for some time.

What is the alternative plan?

• (2120)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Madam Speaker, first and foremost, my statistics are certainly accurate. They were taken from Statistics Canada, which shows the massive increase in gun violence in our cities. I know that may make the minister uncomfortable, but those are the facts.

I did acknowledge, of course, in committee, and I will acknowledge it again, that we appreciate some of the small investments they have made in policing. I will not give him a pat on the back beyond that. The Toronto Star is doing more than enough of that, so I think he has enough.

Half of my speech was about what the Conservatives would do. I would say that I am fairly knowledgeable about this. I have spoken to hundreds of police officers and hundreds of experts across the country, as have the hard-working members of the public safety committee. We would take all the money the Liberals are wasting on bans and buybacks—which is going to be billions of dollars, by the way—and put it into borders, more police and grassroots organizations that save young people from a life of crime. I have been very clear all along on that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague's comment about it not being true that the opposition parties never propose anything. The Bloc Québécois has been proposing a joint peacekeeping unit with the United States for months. Today we learned that Quebec invested \$6.2-million to address this issue, even though borders are a federal responsibility. It is a little strange, but things are not moving quickly on the federal government side.

The Minister of Public Safety tells us that Bill C-21 will address the dramatic increase in daily shootings in Montreal and elsewhere in Canada. However, I read Bill C-21, and it deals with weapons that are legally purchased in Canada.

I may be mistaken, but from what I understand, criminal gangs are behind these shootings, and they get their illegal firearms from traffickers. I could be wrong, though, because the Minister of Public Safety seems to think that criminals buy their guns at Canadian Tire or some other gun shop before going out to shoot up schools or other places.

Does my colleague think I am mistaken or does she also think that criminal gangs, and not local businesses, are supplying these guns?

[*English*]

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Madam Speaker, I could not have said it better myself. I agree completely that this bill, as he said, does surely target lawful firearms owners and does not go after the criminals shooting up our cities, including Montreal, where there have been deaths and where young people are at risk of dying from drive-by shootings. We are now seeing this almost every single day in Montreal.

The minister, respectfully, has kind of been parading around as though Bill C-21 is the big solution and is going to end handguns. He knows it will not. He has to know that. He knows. He is smart. He knows the issue is with illegally smuggled guns and the gangs who illegally possess them and use them to shoot up our cities. This bill would do nothing to address that, and I agree completely with my Bloc colleague.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I enjoy working with my colleague on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. She is quite right that we have a good working relationship.

I have two questions. The first one is that through a technical reading of the bill—because she did talk about lawful gun owners—my understanding of Bill C-21 is that if it becomes law, current owners of handguns could still legally use them. People could still go to a range to fire handguns under the supervision of an RPAL holder, especially if the range owns a collection of handguns. I am just wondering if she can clarify whether that is her understanding of the bill as well.

My second question is about this being a very complex problem. She quoted a lot of police officers. Let me also quote from Staff Sergeant Michael Rowe of the Vancouver Police Department, who also appeared before the public safety committee. He identified straw purchases and the diversion of legally owned handguns as also being big problems.

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Therefore, two things can be true here: We can have a problem from gun smuggling, but there is also a problem from the illegal diversion of legally owned handguns. If we ignore that and focus only on the smuggling problem, we are doing a disservice to public safety. Would she not admit that domestic diversion is also a problem, as was clearly identified by Staff Sergeant Michael Rowe of the Vancouver Police Department?

• (2125)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Madam Speaker, I have enjoyed working with the hon. member on the committee.

On his second question, there is no data available on how many guns in this country are diverted from legal owners, or stolen, as they said. This is sort of a red herring argument.

There is, of course, anecdotal evidence to suggest that this may be part of the problem. I do not believe the officer in question said it was a huge part, but certainly there are methods we can use to reduce straw purchases. One of them is safe storage. We can incentivize safe storage. For the guns legally owned, like the ones I own and the guns others in this place own, the more we can incentivize safe storage in gun safes and the like, the less we will have that as an issue. That should be part of this debate. How we can incentivize safe storage should be part of this bill, because that would make a meaningful impact on something that contributes a very small part to this problem.

Again, I have three or four pages of police saying this bill will do nothing.

On the member's first question, what I am hearing from sport shooters and the elite sport shooters is that this bill would be the death of their sport. There are thousands of these sport shooters. Actually, the Filipinos in my community love sport shooting. They compete provincially, nationally and internationally. They told me they are devastated by this bill. It means that the handguns they bought and the guns they inherited from their fathers, which they plan to give to their daughters and pass along, and these are expensive devices, will no longer be legal.

The opposition is sighing and making fun of this. This is exactly the lack of respect for legal firearm owners that we have seen from the Liberal members. They say, "Too bad, so sad for them." That—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we hear a lot from the government about its input measures. The Liberals spend more than anybody else. That is their common response. Since the bill has been introduced and since the Prime Minister contradicted the earlier quotes he himself made in 2012, which the member mentioned, I am curious about something.

We have heard claims that Bill C-21 will reduce gun crime in our cities, but we have been unable to nail the government down on the actual targets that this measure will hit in terms of crime reduction in the cities. There is not much use in introducing this kind of legislation unless there are actually specific targets that we think it will hit. Could the member comment on whether, either in committee or in the discussions she had with the department and other officials,

the government has set any actual goals for what this will do in having a positive effect in reducing gun crime?

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Madam Speaker, I would like to address the disrespect from the members opposite.

When my grandfather was a young boy, he saved up every penny to buy a rifle that he could go hunting with to sustain his very poor family. He cherished this gun, and when he was dying in palliative care—

I am speaking to the member, actually, through you, Madam Speaker. Perhaps you can learn something about gun culture in this country and the importance of it in—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I am going to interrupt the hon. member. This lack of respect is quite generalized in the House, so I am not going to start appropriating blame. I appreciate that the hon. member is telling a personal story and I am listening very attentively.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Madam Speaker, when he was dying in the final weeks of his life, he brought this gun. It was wrapped up very nicely. He brought it and the cleaning tools to our house. He died about a month later. He brought it and he gifted it to my father, something very symbolically important that goes back over the five generations that we have lived in rural Canada, struggling to sustain ourselves until the two most recent generations. He gave it to my father, and my father will give it to me.

This is a very critical and important part of this discussion that is missing, that needs to be respected, that is lacking and is being laughed at by members opposite. This is why people get so divided and upset about this. It is because there is no dignity given from Liberal members to rural Canada and the heritage that we, with every fibre of our being, believe in—

• (2130)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We have to resume debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to finally speak to Bill C-21.

We had almost given up hope of hearing about a gun control bill before the end of the parliamentary session. The government finally introduced a bill last week, perhaps somewhat reactively. That is typical of the Liberal government, always reacting to events. Unfortunately, a few days ago, there was the massacre in Texas. Also a few days ago, shots were fired near a child care centre in Rivière-des-Prairies, in the greater Montreal area. I get the impression that these kinds of events are what finally pushed the government to act. That is fine, but it is unfortunate that violent events like these have to happen before the government introduces legislation that we have long been calling for.

My colleague from Rivière-du-Nord and I make it our mission during virtually every question period to remind the minister that taking action on gun control is important. That is our topic this evening, but legal weapons are not the only problem. Illegal weapons and arms trafficking, especially in Quebec, but also across Canada, are problems too. I think legislation is long overdue. The Bloc Québécois made it clear elsewhere, in the media for example, that it thinks Bill C-21 is a step in the right direction.

Quite honestly, the previous version of the bill, which was introduced in the last Parliament, pleased nobody. Neither groups for gun control nor those against it liked the bill. It was flawed. I will say that the government really listened to groups advocating for women and victims of shootings. They came to talk to the government and tell it which important elements they thought should be included in the bill. Clearly a lot has changed since the first version, and that is great.

However, we need to point out some elements that are perhaps more negative. As I was saying, unfortunately, Bill C-21 does not solve all the problems. Currently, one of the biggest problems in the greater Montreal area is the shootings being carried out by criminal groups. They are obtaining weapons illegally. There have been shootings in the past with firearms that were 100% legal and that belonged to licensed gun owners who had no mental health issues or criminal records. It does happen, but not very often. I have the impression that most of the shootings happening these days involve illegal firearms. We must find a way to address this problem.

There was talk earlier about how Quebec has been proactive and has almost done everything that we have been calling on the federal government to do for months. We were with the minister this morning at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security when the news dropped that Quebec will invest \$6.2 million in the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service. Representatives from this police department came to tell the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security about their particular situation. Akwesasne is an indigenous community that straddles the borders of Quebec, Ontario and even the United States. This requires collaboration among the different police departments. Smugglers are very familiar with this area, where trafficking is done by boat in the summer and by snowmobile in the winter. Weapons come through the area by the hundreds every week. The federal government needs to get involved because it is responsible for the borders.

This morning, Quebec announced \$6.2 million for police services. This money will be used to hire five additional police officers and to purchase a new patrol boat, an all-terrain vehicle and snowmobiles to bolster the fight against gun smuggling in Quebec.

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This is great news. While making this announcement, Geneviève Guilbault, Quebec's public safety minister, said she was still waiting on the money from an agreement with the federal government. The federal government promised funding to help Quebec and the provinces crack down on firearms, but it seems they are still waiting for this money. They are anxious to receive it and continue this important fight.

● (2135)

Let us come back to Bill C-21. This version is better than earlier ones, but there are still some flaws. Some elements seem poorly drafted. I think it is shameful that the government is rushing things and not letting us have the time to do our job as parliamentarians. I am guessing that is what it intends to do, since that is what has been happening in the House of Commons over the past few days. By constantly invoking closure, the government is trying to shorten debate by a few hours in order to move forward more quickly. However, it is actually our job as parliamentarians to take the time to study bills, debate them in the House, make amendments and improve them. That is what I intend to do with Bill C-21.

I want to try to work constructively with the government to improve the bill. I want to come back to the motion my Conservative colleague wanted to move today at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. I must say that she stated in good faith that there are some elements of the bill that we can all agree on. Let us move forward quickly with those measures, while taking the time to study the rest more closely.

The Liberals did not agree, obviously, for partisan political reasons. On the other hand, when the Liberals try to speed things along, the Conservatives oppose them. Let us try to be more constructive and work together like we do at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. As my colleague mentioned earlier, we very much agree on the firearms issue, to the point where it feels almost unprecedented. We have managed to work together quite well, which is important to highlight.

I want to discuss all aspects of the bill, beginning with the measure about handguns. This is really the government's key measure, which proposes a freeze on the acquisition, sale and transfer of handguns by individuals. This was quite unexpected. I myself was surprised to hear this. I never thought the government would go so far.

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It was the way it proceeded that surprised me a bit. The way this was announced at the press conference made it sound like the freeze was part of Bill C-21. A little later, the government realized that it could proceed through regulations, which is a whole other procedure. It would be 30 business days before this came into effect. Those 30 business days left enough time for those who already had a licence to go out and buy more guns. Gun sales exploded across the country. I saw a B.C. gun seller on CTV News who said that the Prime Minister had become “salesman of the month”. That really is the message he sent to people.

The government's intention was to reduce the number of handguns in circulation, but it had the opposite effect. That is a shame, because I think there was another way to go about this. Take for example the assault weapons ban on May 1, 2020. The government compiled a list of 1,500 banned guns, and the ban came into effect immediately. People did not have time to go out and buy a gun before the ban took effect.

I wonder why the government chose a freeze instead of a ban and why it did that through regulations, when we were led to believe it would be in the bill from the start. Questions like that remain unanswered.

I think it is especially unfortunate that the government did not anticipate that people would rush to the store to buy more guns. Perhaps they should have taken more time to iron out all the details before presenting them.

Our understanding is that once the freeze is in place, handguns will eventually disappear because they can no longer be transferred to someone else. People who currently have a permit will be able to continue to use their guns. Of course, there are some exceptions for police officers and bodyguards who have a firearms licence. It is still unclear what will happen with sport shooters. We are being told that the government will establish by regulation what it all means, but questions are already popping up.

The procedures in Quebec are quite strict already. I get the sense that these regulations will not necessarily change much in Quebec, but I will come back to that.

I would like to say that I am not a firearms expert. It is easy enough to go on social media, demonize me and say that I have no clue what I am talking about.

• (2140)

Recently, I was asked if I knew the procedure for buying a weapon. It is actually fairly complex. I will give the people who asked me this: It may happen overnight in the United States, for example, but not here.

Gun culture is a thing in the United States, and it is pretty intense. We are worried it might spread to Canada. Acquiring a firearm, however, is very different. After the Texas shooting a few days ago, people from *Le Journal de Montréal* went down there to run a test and find out how individuals get firearms. What they found out is that all one needs is a driver's licence and 15 minutes to walk out of the store with a gun and ammo. In Texas, it takes longer to buy a car than a weapon. That is pretty unbelievable.

In Canada, the rules are stricter, and I think that is a good thing. People who choose to pursue their passion for firearms and make it their hobby need to understand that weapons are dangerous. That is why they need to be regulated. It all needs to be governed by regulations. I think we have to be cognizant of that.

If someone in Quebec wants to obtain a handgun right now, they have to complete several training courses. There is the Canadian firearms safety course, the Canadian restricted firearms safety course and the Bill 9 aptitude test. Next, they have to apply for a possession and acquisition licence. That can take around six months. Lastly, the individual has to join a shooting club. That is a requirement in Quebec.

I will admit that this is not a simple process and cannot be done overnight. I sometimes hear the rhetoric that guns are not dangerous, that the person pulling the trigger is dangerous. I have to disagree. Guns are dangerous.

As I was saying, anyone using this device or tool, I am not sure what to call it, needs to be aware that it is dangerous. Anyone choosing to use a firearm must be aware that it could be used by a person with bad intentions and that firearm regulations make sense.

What we understand is that with the freeze handguns will eventually disappear. We also understand that for people who train to use guns competitively, there may be a way to get around the rules. Reading legislation or regulations is rather complicated. However, when we take the time to read between the lines, we sometimes see certain details that may be questionable. That is true here, there are questionable details, and we certainly need to take this to committee to determine what it means.

The other thing is that the freeze may not do anything beyond what Quebec is already doing, in other words require that a person be a member of a gun club before being able to acquire a handgun. If a person is already a member of a gun club then there will be no real change. They will be grandfathered and allowed to continue using the handgun. These are questions I will have to ask during study of the bill.

I want to come back again to the fact that people have been rushing out to purchase handguns, because they know the regulations are not yet in effect. This shows that Bill C-21 will not solve the problem in the short term, so it does not meet its own objective. Guns continue to be a problem on our streets and in our municipalities, which is why people are increasingly concerned. We are reminded of this every day, given current events.

There was another car chase in broad daylight in a residential area in greater Montreal yesterday. Dozens of shots were fired. People were eating on their balconies and walking down the street, and they witnessed this first-hand. Fortunately there were no casualties, but there could have been injuries and even fatalities. It has practically become the norm in Montreal, in Quebec. It is scary when you think about it. It is also scary for parents to send their children to school, to go to work, or to go anywhere for that matter, because in the last few months, there have been shots fired near a day care centre, near schools and even in a library. The library's windows shattered because of the gunfire. It is unbelievable.

This notorious gun culture, which I mentioned earlier and is entrenched in the United States, seems to be gradually taking hold in Canada, and no one wants that. Unfortunately, Bill C-21 gives us no reassurance that it will solve this problem. It might solve certain things and it might be a step in the right direction, but the terrible problem of gun trafficking remains prevalent. Bill C-21 does not address this.

• (2145)

I want to share some statistics. According to the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal, 95% of handguns used in violent crimes come from the black market. During question period we often hear that organized crime uses illegal weapons and that members of these organizations are the ones committing crimes most of the time.

I often hear people say that we are going after good, law-abiding gun owners. This is true in some cases, but not always. As I said earlier, mass shootings with legal firearms are rare, but they do happen.

We made a lot of proposals that were not included in Bill C-21 in an attempt to find a number of measures that would work best together. My colleague from Rivière-du-Nord introduced Bill C-279 to create an organized crime registry.

The way we see it, giving police officers more tools and means to act is another way we can control firearms. Why is being a member of a terrorist group illegal but being a member of organized crime is not? This is a fair question because organized crime groups are behind the violence we are seeing in the big cities right now. I think that this bill could be a worthwhile, easy-to-implement tool, and I urge the minister and his colleagues to read it.

We have heard a great deal about investments at the border, and I just mentioned the investments made by Quebec. We must not forget that the border is under federal jurisdiction and that there is work to be done there. Witnesses told us about what is actually happening at the border. Even border services officers told us that they were ready for their mandate to be expanded and that they would like to patrol the areas between border crossings, which they currently cannot do. It is true that the Canada-U.S. border is so long that it is almost impossible to have officers covering every kilometre of it. However, the mandate of these officers could be expanded so they could go on patrol.

My colleague also reminded us earlier that smuggled guns and drugs arrive in Canada by boat and by train. We do not have the tools we need to search these conveyances. These types of mea-

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asures could certainly help the fight against firearms, especially those that are illegal.

Thanks to a motion that I moved a few months ago in the House, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security was able to study this problem. It was the topic of its first report, which was tabled recently in the House. The report contains several recommendations for more resources and more collaboration. On that subject, the RCMP commissioner admitted to the committee that police forces could talk to each other more and share more information.

Experts from public safety agencies agreed with every point and argument we made and told us that we do indeed need to provide more financial and human resources. It is a problem that we will not be able to fix in the short term, but we should start working on it immediately.

The National Police Federation told me that the police forces are short on officers and will not be able to get more overnight. I learned that dozens of officers are deployed every week to Roxham Road to receive irregular migrants. The Government of Quebec and the Bloc Québécois have been calling for that road to be closed so that the migrants can be received the regular way through a safe, normal process. This would allow these officers to be reassigned to the fight against guns.

Madam Speaker, since you are signalling that my time is up, I will end there and I look forward to my colleagues' questions.

• (2150)

[*English*]

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Bill C-21 is being considered without quorum, and for Hansard it should be noted that a debate is happening contrary to the constitutional requirement that the House cannot depart from its own code of procedure when the procedure is entrenched in the Constitution of Canada.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I would like to remind the hon. member that quorum does not apply right now.

On May 2, the House duly adopted an order prescribing that the Chair shall not receive any quorum calls after 6:30 p.m. The Chair delivered a ruling as to the admissibility of the motion, including the section dealing with quorum calls during extended sittings of the House in May and June. The ruling can be found in the Debates of May 2, 2022, at pages 4,577 and 4,578. I would invite the member to read the ruling of the Speaker to find that this matter has already been settled.

This has been raised on a number of occasions, and we have read the same information into the record. There is no debate. I have already ruled on the quorum.

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On another point of order, the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence:** Madam Speaker, I would say that the Constitution actually trumps the order of the Speaker, or of—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** This is now becoming a debate or a challenge to the Chair, which is not acceptable.

The hon. deputy government whip.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I would like to congratulate the minister and the government for putting forth this legislation. I know that Canadians, and especially my constituents of Brampton North, have been feeling for a while that enough is enough and that governments need to take action on gun crime and gun control. In 2019, the government put forward action to ban assault rifles, and that process is ongoing. This legislation will complement that action.

From the member's speech, I know she cares about this issue very much. The member specifically mentioned smuggling over the border and illegal guns coming into the country. Would the member support this legislation, since a large portion of the legislation has to do with that very piece? We are increasing maximum penalties from 10 years to 14 years with this piece of legislation, and much more goes hand in hand with this. The government previously put \$350 million in to strengthen the RCMP and CBSA, and \$250 million—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I do have other members who want ask questions. This is questions and comments, not debate. I will allow the hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia to respond.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Madam Speaker, I can see that my colleague is very familiar with the file, and I thank her for that. Of course I talked about the negative first and left the positive to the end, but I did not have time to get to the positive. I must admit that Bill C-21 does actually contain some good measures, such as the red flag and yellow flag measures. As I pointed out earlier, the minister has been very attentive to various groups and what they were calling for.

I said that I would work constructively with the government to improve any aspects that are perhaps less positive. When it comes time to vote, we will see whether the Bloc Québécois will support this bill.

I would also have liked to see something on assault weapons in this bill. What we heard from the Prime Minister at his press conference was that the buyback program would be postponed and that public consultation would begin later. A lot of work remains to be done on this, unfortunately, and we can talk about that at another time.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I agree with many of the points that the member made. I appreciate the respect she has for legal gun owners, unlike some members of the Liberal party.

Can the member tell the House what we heard in committee about Akwesasne and gun smuggling and whether this bill will resolve the problem?

• (2155)

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her French, which I must say is excellent. I thank her for making the effort to ask this question.

Indeed, this subject concerned me in committee. The opposition parties cannot invite as many witnesses as the government, but I still made an effort to invite the band council for the indigenous communities of the Akwesasne territory and the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service to appear.

They came to explain their reality to us. They are often demonized in the media and accused of being complicit in this arms trafficking, which is definitely not the case. They asked to be partnered with other police forces in this fight, and that is exactly what the Quebec government did today by giving them the means to act. Unfortunately, that is not what Bill C-21 does for them.

[*English*]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I enjoy serving with my colleague on the public safety committee.

During the course of her speech, she very much highlighted the problems with smuggling and Canada sharing a border with the United States, which is the largest gun manufacturer in the world. We know that gun smugglers are finding creative ways to get them into Canada. There was a story last month about criminals using a drone to bring handguns into Canada.

Therefore, it is going to require a set of policies. We have to work with our U.S. partners to tackle the supply, but I want to know about the demand side. Those guns are coming into Canada because there is a demand for them. I just wonder if the member can inform the House on some of the policies she thinks would be best to tackle the demand side of the gun equation here in Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Madam Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague's question. Those were recommendations from the report that members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security agreed on. The government must invest more in community services to prevent youth from committing crimes and joining gangs. These changes do not happen overnight; they are a long-term proposition.

Mental health issues are another factor. Young people are radicalized or join gangs for many different reasons. I think it is important to invest in that kind of measure as well. It is complementary.

I feel compelled to ask the federal government once again to invest in health, to give Quebec and the provinces the means to take care of things by transferring the money they are entitled to. That has not yet happened, unfortunately. We need that money to take action for young people, to address mental health and to tackle guns.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia for her speech.

According to Statistics Canada, 75% of gun deaths, the vast majority, are unrelated to gangs or crimes. They are suicides. Harvard research refutes the misconception that people who are determined to kill themselves will find a way, but the lethality of the chosen method is important.

Does my colleague think Bill C-21 will reduce the number of suicides?

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question, but it brings another question to my mind. How did these gun owners get them in the first place?

Did they get them legally or illegally? That question needs to be asked.

Of course, it does not help that there are so many guns already out there. The fact that people have guns in their homes without any real restrictions, that they do not keep them out of the hands of children or prevent children from having easy access to them, certainly does not help.

I do agree that Bill C-21 has a noble objective: to take as many handguns as possible out of circulation. This will certainly have a positive effect, since an individual who does not already have a licence will no longer be able to obtain a handgun. We will wait to see the figures, but we hope this will have a positive impact, because we are working together to improve this bill.

• (2200)

[English]

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the speech from the member, and I enjoy working with her on public safety. Reference has been made several times in tonight's speech to the study coming out of the public safety committee on guns, gangs and drug smuggling.

One piece of evidence that we heard from quite a few witnesses, including Statistics Canada, is that we do not really know the source of guns used in crime. Anecdotally, we think that most of them come from the United States of America, but we do not know for sure. I wonder if the member could comment on the gap in evidence or in data.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

That is something we addressed by asking public safety agencies to invest more in tracing in order to determine, once they are seized, where these guns are coming from.

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However, once again, we need to give the police a way to seize these weapons and then share the information with other police forces. We need to make it easier for them to work together to obtain this type of information.

As the member said, it is hard right now to know where these guns are coming from. We can guess that many of them are from the United States, but were they brought in legally or illegally? Often, they came in illegally.

As for this sharing of information between security agencies and police forces, I think that improvements need to be made. Of course, this takes investments. That is what we recommended in the report, and I hope this will produce tangible results.

[English]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be joining colleagues from all parties in this debate tonight on Bill C-21.

I want to acknowledge the time I have enjoyed as the NDP's public safety critic. It is a big responsibility. There are many different departments to keep track of. I also want to say in deference to previous speakers that I have enjoyed working with the minister on a number of issues and with my Conservative and Bloc colleagues. I will echo previous comments tonight that we do enjoy a good working relationship. If we look at previous Parliaments, that might seem a bit odd for the public safety committee because we do deal with some fairly explosive issues where there is not always a lot of agreement to be found.

I come at this debate tonight as a representative of a rural riding. My riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford is about 4,700 square kilometres in size. A lot of the constituents whom I represent are responsible firearms owners. They enjoy going to the range. They enjoy using firearms for hunting and other recreational activities.

However, it has to be stated, and this is a key difference between Canada and our southern neighbours, that owning a firearm in Canada is a privilege. By far the vast majority of firearms owners in Canada respect that privilege. They use their firearms in a very safe and respectful manner. Gun safety and the careful operation and storage of guns have always been paramount to the constituents that I have spoken to.

Indeed, I do have a lot of friends who are firearms owners. I grew up with firearms. My father has several that he inherited from his childhood. I have enjoyed spending time at various ranges throughout my riding. A few years ago, I was a guest at the Victoria fish and game club. Under the careful supervision of someone with a restricted possession and authorization licence, I was shown how to safely use a handgun at the range. There a lot of people who do enjoy the target shooting aspect of it.

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I have seen a lot of debate on firearms before and during my time in Parliament and it is a pretty explosive issue. It can be very often used as a wedge in our political system. I want to find a way to talk about the legislation before us in a respectful way, one that lowers the temperature and where we can depolarize the debate while maybe seeking to make some parts of the bill better at committee.

I am trying to walk the line between the Liberals and the Conservatives. The Liberals sometimes have a tendency to put forward a bill, hold it up as a shiny trophy, and say it is going to fix the problem. The Conservatives on the other side tend to have a knee-jerk reaction to firearms legislation and their default position is to oppose. This is an issue where we have to walk the line between those two, where we recognize that legislation is important. We cannot simply say no for the sake of saying no, but we also have to realize that legislation by itself is not going to solve a problem as complex as gun violence. It has to be part and parcel of a whole range of things.

Bill C-21 in this Parliament does share the same number as the previous firearms legislation in the 43rd Parliament, which was also Bill C-21. That bill, however, never advanced past second reading. Unfortunately, it was allowed to die on the Order Paper when we had, in my view, the unnecessary election of 2021. There was a lot of hullabaloo about the introduction of that bill, but not a lot of effort was put forward by the government to advance it in any meaningful way.

Here we are again. We are in the 44th Parliament. We are in June. We have been at this for quite some time and we are only now just getting to the first round of second reading debate on the bill.

There is an important human element to this debate. Many lives have been lost in Canada to rising gun crime and we have to acknowledge that many communities are feeling unsafe.

● (2205)

Canadians want their government to act to prevent tragedies, not just respond to them. That is the proactive piece of the puzzle here, not just reacting to the bad news we often see. We need to demonstrate that follow-through and commitment to addressing firearms violence. That is where I think Bill C-21 comes into play. Not only is the smuggling of illegal firearms a big problem in Canada, but there is also a very real issue with the domestic diversion of legal firearms and the way they can find their way into the hands of criminals.

I am proud to be a member of a party that has supported the goal of getting military-style assault weapons off the streets. I support the plans for a mandatory buyback. That is a significant improvement over the voluntary buyback that was proposed in the previous Parliament, because we want to find a way of making sure that these weapons are forever off of our streets and do not pose a danger. Back in 2008, Jack Layton, our leader at the time, was the first political leader in Canada to propose giving municipalities the power to ban handguns within their jurisdictions.

I think whatever side of the spectrum we fall on with respect to this debate, we can all agree it is time for the government to get serious about tackling gun crime. We have different ideas on how that is to be achieved, but I think we agree on the same basic premise.

I want to give a nod to the public safety committee. The great report that we tabled earlier this year has been referenced in a few speeches tonight. That report was the result of 50 witnesses over seven meetings. We had numerous representatives from different police services across Canada, criminal defence lawyers, community organizations and also important government bodies like Statistics Canada. I want to acknowledge the Bloc Québécois for bringing forward that motion for a study. It resulted in 34 recommendations. We are awaiting a government response. I know that takes time, but I am looking forward to reading the government's response to those solid recommendations.

We had a number of recommendations. We realized that Statistics Canada needs additional resources. It has reported that there are gaps in its reporting. There are limitations in its knowledge about the firearms that are used in crimes. We need more information and details about particular firearms, their exact type, who owns them, how they are stored, whether the owners are licensed, and so on.

There was also a recommendation about increasing funding to the Canadian criminal intelligence service to enable comprehensive intelligence sharing across all police services so we can improve their effectiveness in tracing firearms. There was a recognition that smuggling is a significant contributor to gun and gang violence in Canada and that more resources must be allocated to combatting it. Also, the Government of Canada, as part of its prohibition on firearms, should implement a mandatory buyback program. That was a recommendation in the report that was supported by committee members.

In addition, I also think that because the report also illustrated the context in which we operate, this problem is not going to be solved by legislation, funding or a shift in policies alone. It is a multi-faceted issue that is going to require reflection, a comprehensive set of solutions, including data collection and research, prevention and intervention, coordination and collaboration between all levels of government, law enforcement and civil society actors.

We know the statistics have not been favourable. That has been mentioned by a few of my colleagues. We know that the rates of firearms-related violent crimes started an upward climb in 2014, with the largest documented increase between 2014 and 2015. Between 2019 and 2020 there were notable increases, including in southern rural British Columbia, the northern part of Ontario, rural Alberta, the Northwest Territories and Nova Scotia. This is the important part: Handguns were the most serious weapon present in most firearm-related violent crimes between 2009 and 2014, and also between 2015 and 2020.

● (2210)

I now want to focus on the smuggling, which we know is a major problem. It is a consequence of our sharing a border with the United States. The problem, and this goes to the data collection, is that we do not have an accurate figure. It might even be impossible to ever get an accurate figure, because for every successful interdiction, there are so many that will get through. It is simply impossible to extrapolate what the full problem is in that regard.

In this conversation about firearms and the root causes of gun and gang violence, we have to know that there are so many different factors at play here. This is far from a black and white issue. During our committee study, we learned from great testimony from witnesses that things like poverty, inequality, racism, mental illness, social isolation, substance abuse, extremist ideologies, education and health, are all factors which in some way contribute to the phenomenon of gun violence and how bad it can be in some communities.

There is also a very strong correlation between the drug trade in Canada and firearms violence. I think this is important. This House has recently been seized with the issue of Canada's drug laws. We have seen reference to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act in another government bill, Bill C-5, which sets out a declaration of principles.

The member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke was able to successfully amend that to make sure that criminal records for simple possession will be sequestered after two years. That is an important amendment. The member for Courtenay—Alberni, my friend and neighbour to the north, has his very important private member's bill, Bill C-216.

Almost every single police agency that was before our committee spoke of the interwoven nature of the drug trade and the gun trade. The simple fact is that there are obscene amounts of money that can be made in the drug trade. The introduction of fentanyl and carfentanil has completely changed the profitability game. Every single witness who was talking on this subject said that gang members involved in the drug trade feel the need to have guns on their person to protect their turf and their trade because of the competitive nature of it.

One of the most successful ways we can tackle gun problems in Canada is to enact bold, progressive policies to deal with the demand side, to deal with people's addictions and to make sure we are not harming the people who are out there being nabbed by police for simple possession. Instead, we should be trying to make sure that we are relieving them of the criminal stigma of substance use. We should be drying up that demand so that gangs are not competing for that turf. That is a big scourge for many of our big cities in Canada, and until we see bold policy to deal with this, I fear that years from now we are still going to be having the same conversation about gun violence in Canada.

Let us now turn to some of the main features of Bill C-21. By far, the one that has garnered the most attention is the handgun freeze. It is essentially going to prevent the chief firearms officer from approving the transfer of handguns to individuals. It will effectively ban the buying, selling, transferring and importing of

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handguns to anyone other than certain businesses and exempted individuals.

To be clear, my technical reading of the bill is that if Bill C-21 were to receive royal assent tomorrow, anyone who is a current RPAL holder and owns a handgun will still be able to lawfully use that handgun just as they did today and yesterday. That will have no change.

It will impact people who are seeking to buy new handguns, but again, exemptions are carved out, for example, if someone can demonstrate that they need a handgun for their line of work. I know foresters who will not travel out into the bush in grizzly country unless they are carrying a handgun. That will be considered an exempted individual.

● (2215)

If someone is a professional target shooter and belongs to an Olympic-qualified organization, we might look at amending that and broadening the scope. The person would still be allowed to use a handgun, and so on.

I acknowledge that smuggling is a huge problem, but we have also had witnesses talk about the problem of the domestic diversion of legal weapons and people using their licences for straw purchases. I think, if we were to completely ignore that side of the equation, we would be doing a disservice to Canadians and to the whole question of public safety on this issue.

The other big aspect of Bill C-21 is the red flag and yellow flag regime, which would basically allow anyone to bypass the police and go directly to a provincial court judge to request the immediate removal of weapons from an individual who they believe is going to pose a danger to themselves or to others. I will note that, in the way Bill C-21 is written, there is an improvement to this aspect of the previous bill, because it would allow a judge to protect the privacy of an individual applying for that emergency prohibition. The judge could also have the option of holding hearings in private and sealing court documents. That is an important improvement to the previous version of the bill.

However, we know organizations such as PolySeSouvient still have problems with how this section is written. I believe that at committee we are going to have to take a deeper dive into whether this can be improved upon.

We also know that members of the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians were not fans of the previous red flag law. They said:

...placing the onus on a family member of a depressed person, a demented parent, or the perpetrator of domestic violence to go through the court system is a largely unworkable and unwelcome hindrance to getting guns temporarily out of the home of those in crisis.

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Others said that the current version of Bill C-21 was “a big, evidence-based step towards reducing gun injury and death in Canada,” so kudos to the government for getting that from physicians who deal with gunshot wounds on a regular basis. They still want to see the particular details of the new red flag law and how it is actually going to work. Of course, the yellow flag law would allow the chief firearms officer to temporarily suspend and review an individual firearms licence while that eligibility is determined.

I want to end on airsoft. In my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, there is a massive airsoft community and people love this sport. I had previously only participated in paintball, so I know the fun and the thrill of it, and people who engage in airsoft as a sport love what they do. It is a great outdoor recreational activity, and these people are concerned by the provisions in this bill that are targeting replica models.

We have to find a way to have members of the airsoft community come before our committee. I think we have to have a conversation with the government on how we can find a workable solution so that people are not unfairly targeted for participating in a sport they enjoy. I think there is a middle ground in there somewhere. I acknowledge the concern that law enforcement has with replica airsoft rifles. At a distance, it is not easy to tell whether it is a replica or the real thing, and we certainly did hear at committee that some people had been successful at converting airsoft guns into fully functioning firearms, so that is a very real concern out there.

I know I am in my final minute, so I will just conclude with this: The firearms debate is never a black and white issue, and I know there are a variety of opinions on this topic, but I am going to try to thread the needle. At this point in the debate, I am going to signal my support for getting this bill to committee, because I do not want to just throw it out at this stage. I believe it deserves a closer look, and I believe all members, including my Conservative colleagues, deserve to have the opportunity to focus on the particular sections of the bill, bring forward their witnesses and have an adult conversation about the direction we want to take our country in and what we ultimately want to see out of this.

With that, I will conclude. I appreciate this opportunity, and I look forward to questions from my colleagues.

• (2220)

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would ask my hon. colleague whether this really simply comes down to a question of values. I have shot an AR-15. I have shot handguns at the range, but I do not need to have one at home.

As a privilege in Canada, would he agree that, really, it is a privilege that should no longer exist, and that some firearms just simply do not belong in civilian hands?

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Madam Speaker, he mentioned the model AR-15. It is a firearm that has become synonymous with some of the most brutal mass shootings imaginable in the United States. We have to be careful. Canada and the United States are two very different countries when it comes to our firearms laws, but I would agree that certain models of firearms have no place in our society.

I am not talking about non-restricted firearms, or the people who are out there hunting and shooting with their bolt-action rifles or shotguns. I am talking about those ones that can cause death as quickly as one can pull a trigger.

With Bill C-21, though, the debate is not on the way a firearm looks but its functionality. We have had this debate at the public safety committee. It is something that is still unresolved because there are models of firearms out there, semi-automatic rifles, that have the same capacity and same function as firearms that were banned by the OIC, but they are still legal.

We need to have a conversation about where we are drawing the line and how we are actually going to define what a prohibited firearm is. That is a conversation that we still owe to Canadians.

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Madam Speaker, first, I would like to acknowledge the member's speech. He spent a lot of time talking about the root causes and the need to address those. To me, the key thing is to sort out the poverty, the drugs, the gangs and the crime in the country if we really want to get down to reducing gun crime.

I would like the member to clarify something. He mentioned that he thought it would be statistically impossible to get to some of the data. I want to remind the member that every legal handgun in Canada is registered. Whether they are straw purchased or not, they are registered, so it is not difficult to figure out how many legal handguns are involved in gun crimes in this country.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Madam Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague. I do not have the statistics in front of me, but I can assure my colleague that I have seen them. I was reading them in preparation for the speech. The issue, though, is when it comes to legal firearms, handguns or long guns that have been stolen. The discrepancy is with the ones that were reported missing and ones that were reported stolen versus the ones that were recovered. Yes, handguns especially have been registered and they are in the system, but there is a discrepancy between the ones that were reported stolen and the ones that were actually recovered. We know that some of those legal firearms are still out on the street. They could potentially be used to commit crimes and they may never be recovered. I think that is the discrepancy I was referring to.

He is absolutely right. We do not know what we do not know. If we are going to have an adult conversation about this, the Government of Canada needs to give Statistics Canada the proper resources so that we can paint a picture, not only for the citizens of Canada, but for the law enforcement that does that important job for us every single day.

*Government Orders*

• (2225)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke about AR-15s and the mandatory buyback program for assault weapons. I did not have time to talk about this in my speech earlier, but I would like him to comment on how the government has decided to proceed.

The government started by banning 1,500 guns effective May 1, 2020. Today, the list of banned guns has grown to nearly 1,800, including the AR-15, which is quite popular and was used in certain unfortunately notorious shootings. However, guns that function much like the AR-15 are still being sold. For example, the WK-180 uses the same ammunition and is still on the market.

The gun lobby, gun shops and gun sellers are finding ways to get around these regulations. Even if we continue to add gun models to the blacklist, others will come on the market. We proposed including a definition of a prohibited assault weapon directly in the Criminal Code. That way, they could all be put in the same basket and would be banned all at once instead of one by one. What does my colleague think about that?

[*English*]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Madam Speaker, I remember in May 2020, when that Order in Council was issued, I got a lot of feedback from my constituents in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. Overwhelmingly, their frustration was with the suddenness of it: the fact that Parliament never had the opportunity for its elected representatives to debate it. Their preference, overwhelmingly, would have been to have Parliament debate that issue.

I acknowledge my colleague's concern on the lack of a proper definition. I think that both she and I will have questions for the government members on the committee about what they intend to do and whether that loophole is something that needs to be fixed in Bill C-21, and I will be looking forward to the Liberals' response in that regard.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for the information that he brought to the debate and also for the tone, which I think is quite constructive. The member recognized that there are many lawful gun owners in Canada who have a culture of responsible use, but that we nevertheless have a serious problem with gun crime in Canada. Part of that has to do with the diversion of legitimate weapons out of the homes of responsible owners and into the hands of those who would use them to harm Canadians.

We have heard some discussion in the House tonight from Conservatives, which I welcome, talking about the root causes of crime. I also remember that their government, first of all, made the classification system for prohibited weapons and took it out of the hands of Parliament so that cabinet could do it directly, which is something they later complained about. I remember that the Conservatives cut hundreds of jobs from the CBSA and over \$140 million in funding. I know that they defunded a number of programs that addressed questions of poverty. In fact, when we talk about things like a guaranteed annual income and various other kinds of supports that would help people living in—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** This is questions and comments, and the hon. member has already been going for one minute. I have other people who want to ask questions, and so I will go to the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for an answer.

I would ask members to maybe look at me so that I can give them the signal of when to wrap up.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's intervention, and I will focus on his remarks about the CBSA.

It is true that the CBSA is still recovering from those cuts, but I think we also need to have a conversation about its role and responsibility. Currently, the CBSA is limited to operating at Canada's ports of entry, and if CBSA officers see illegal activity that is happening outside of a port of entry, they have to call the RCMP in. This can sometimes result in some snafus between the two agencies working together, so we may need to have a conversation about expanding the mandate of the CBSA and also providing the funding so that CBSA officers can do their jobs and keep those illegal firearms from coming into Canada.

• (2230)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for an excellent speech, and particularly for reflecting on the complexity, such that we do not know what we do not know.

In looking at the statistics, it is counterintuitive that more violent deaths occur in rural areas in Canada. This is probably legal gun owners and a lot of violence within families. One would think that urban guns were where we were getting more violent crime, but it is actually less than in rural areas. Urban areas are associated with more actual criminal activities, but fewer deaths. It is complicated.

I want to come back to the member's closing comments to the member for Elmwood—Transcona. The Canada Border Services Agency is not just short of funds, but it is also short of credibility. It has a very high rate of reports of racist incidents, and it also has no oversight body. Does the member have any comment on the need for an oversight body for CBSA?

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Madam Speaker, I was very happy to see the government also introduce Bill C-20, which is the result of some very considerate recommendations from a report in the previous Parliament on systemic racism in policing in Canada. That bill would set up a public complaints and review commission: It is a stand-alone piece of legislation, a stand-alone agency, that would have the authority to investigate both the CBSA and the RCMP. It would require statutory timelines for responses to its investigations, and it would have the funds necessary to hold both of those law enforcement agencies to account.

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**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Davenport.

It is a true honour to be able to take part in this debate tonight on Bill C-21. This historic legislation builds on the government's previous work to end gun violence and keep Canadian communities safe.

My friends across the aisle often speak about the need to address gun smuggling and trafficking that contribute to gun violence. This bill would do that by strengthening border control measures, increasing penalties for trafficking offences and providing law enforcement with better tools to investigate gun crimes. This bill would also implement a national freeze on handguns, and it addresses many concerns that survivors of gun violence, experts, advocates and chiefs of police have raised.

Tonight, though, I want to focus my comments on the survivors of intimate partner violence, who have been asking for laws like this for decades. Before becoming elected to represent Thunder Bay—Superior North, I ran a large homeless shelter where I heard countless stories from women who were fleeing the violence they faced from their intimate partners. I also worked with many young people who were trying to escape violent homes and violent realities.

Then, as minister of status of women, my first cabinet position, which I was so honoured to hold upon my election in 2015, I was told by many women and 2SLGBTQ+ people terrifying and emotional stories about how their partners used violence as a way to control and intimidate them. These stories are ones that I carry with me and that propel me to do more. I bring with me their determination and their requests for change.

Intimate partner violence does not only refer to physical harm. Abusers use control to dominate their partners and often a legally acquired registered and licensed firearm is the underlying threat that accompanies those control efforts. Victims of gun violence, women's groups and advocates who work so hard to protect the lives and safety of women and two-spirited people have spoken out for years, asking for stronger controls on access to deadly weapons that can be used to control women, sometimes with fatal finality.

Following the massacre of 14 female students at École Polytechnique, PolySeSouvient has advocated for stronger gun control so that families and communities would never again have to experience such excruciating loss. I have met with some of these families. I am in awe of their determination to change our laws and to better protect women. Their commitment means that they relive the loss of their loved daughter, sister or friend over and over in their work. In 1989, I was 23 years old, and I remember vividly the Polytechnique shooting and imagining being targeted solely because of my gender.

I will never forget, yet it was not until two years ago, under our Liberal government, that 1,500 assault-style weapons such as AR-15s were banned, which is something that women advocates had been urging for 31 years. Since then, over 300 more types of assault rifles have been prevented from entering the market, and the

Conservatives have fought us on this action. Despite their tough-on-crime stance, they staunchly stood with gun lobbyists instead of survivors and families, but we knew that we could do more.

Women's advocates have worked for years to implore for changes that would legally allow for the removal of weapons after warning signs of violence, including for charges that are recorded in police databases. For too long, their voices were ignored. Despite the many, many calls for action and the many reports and the many studies, survivors of intimate partner violence were left unheard and women in abusive relationships were not protected.

Studies have shown that having a firearm in a home, even legally obtained, increases the likelihood of suicide and that victims of intimate partner violence are five times as likely to be killed if a firearm is present in the home. That is why these measures, such as a freeze on handguns and red flag laws, are so important.

Bill C-21 proposes the creation of red flag and yellow flag provisions. These provisions would make it easier for anyone who is threatened by the presence of a firearm in their home or by an individual who owns a firearm, to protect themselves and others.

● (2235)

The red flag regime would allow anyone, not just police, to apply to the courts for an immediate removal of an individual's firearm if they pose a danger. The yellow flag regime would allow anyone to ask a chief firearms officer to suspend and examine an individual's licence if there are reasonable suspicions that the person is no longer eligible to hold a licence.

There are also other situations where a person may be suicidal or who has openly advocated hatred or violence against someone, and these laws will save lives. In Canada, gun ownership is a privilege. It is not a right. Canadians earn the privilege of owning a firearm when they adhere to strict laws, regulations and requirements regarding licensing, training, storage and use of a firearm.

This is a principle that differentiates Canada from many other countries in the world and leads to less gun violence than other countries, including the United States. My heart is with so many families that have lost children, loved ones and partners through the rampant gun violence that is ripping apart communities across the country to the south of us.

*Government Orders*

However, we must not be complacent here in our country. We must listen to the voices of families and survivors. We must do better to protect each other and our communities from coercive control using firearms and the violence that could ensue.

In my riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North many people own firearms for hunting and sport shooting. The proposed legislation that was introduced last week would not restrict guns used for these purposes.

Canadian women have asked for action, and the Minister of Public Safety has stepped forward as an ally. We must all put our best efforts forward to pass this legislation and save lives.

As the Prime Minister said, we need more than thoughts and prayers. We need concrete action. That is exactly what Bill C-21 does, it provides concrete action to protect women and others from devastating violence.

I am very proud to support this bill at second reading, and I do hope that my colleagues will also support the bill.

**Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it has come up in several debates this evening that there would be exemptions for the sport shooting community.

We have heard the term “expert sport shooters”. One becomes an expert by practising. Will the exemptions be carved out for those who are attempting to represent Canada on the international stage in that community, or is this bill a means to an end?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Speaker, our government has been very clear that this is legislation that does not target hunters and sport shooters. In fact, in my own riding, I have a community of both hunters and sport shooters that are thriving and that are honoured by many of their neighbours, friends and colleagues.

This is about creating safer communities for all Canadians. Sport shooters can rest assured that we would not eliminate sport shooting nor prohibit new sport shooting enthusiasts from using business-owned handguns. In my riding, hunting has a long tradition amongst many families. The hunters I know do not use handguns to shoot a deer. Today's announcement will not affect hunters and farmers.

This is smart legislation. It is compassionate legislation. It is designed precisely to keep people, women, families and communities safe.

• (2240)

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the minister spoke about victims and victim organizations raising their voices over the years and offering input that has been expressed in Bill C-21.

Could the member elaborate on that point, particularly for urban communities? We have seen that impact not only there but also in rural communities. I would like to hear her perspective on that.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Speaker, as a person who worked closely with communities that have been traumatized by violence, I have met survivors of gun violence, victims of intimate partner vio-

lence and certainly groups of allies and advocates across the country in my political role.

The message continues to be the same, which is that Canada has to do more to protect women and vulnerable people, such as those in 2SLGBTQ communities, and that we need to do more quickly. As I mentioned in my speech, sometimes the violence is overt, as in guns are used in extremely devastating ways that end lives, but sometimes guns have been used in ways to control victims through coercive control. I know that is something that has come up in the House and at committees. I am looking forward to the ongoing work to address intimate partner violence, which exists in such endemic ways across our country.

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to build off the question from my Conservative colleague and ask the minister to explain how businesses are supposed to take over this role of owning handguns for new enthusiasts. In my riding, I belong to the Owen Sound Revolver Club. It is out in the boonies. It does not have any ability to store a large number of handguns. It would have to leave a building unsecured or spend millions. I just do not know how the sport shooting community is going to adapt to that, especially in rural Canada, like where the minister lives.

I would like the minister to expand in greater detail as to how these active sport shooting communities with handguns are going to actually implement what she is suggesting would happen with Bill C-21.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Speaker, I will say this about our government. One thing that I am very confident in is that we will be able to work with sport shooting communities and business owners to ensure that we understand those challenges, that we can help support those communities and, indeed, support businesses to comply with the law and ensure they continue to support sport shooting across this country.

Again, this legislation is not targeted at lawful gun owners. This is about restricting access to guns that have only one purpose, which is to harm or control people.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a true honour for me to speak this evening on behalf of the residents of my riding of Davenport. It is a riding I am very honoured to represent.

The objective of Bill C-21, which is what we are debating this evening, is to amend the Criminal Code and Firearms Act in order to do four key things: establish a national freeze on handguns; establish red-flag and yellow-flag laws and expand gun licence revocation; combat firearms smuggling and trafficking, notably by increasing the maximum penalty of imprisonment for indictable weapons offences; and prohibit mid-velocity replica air guns.

### *Government Orders*

In short, it is clear action from our federal government to address gun violence, which has been on the rise in Canada and presents a serious and significant threat to the well-being of Canadian communities. Since 2009, violent offences involving guns have increased by 81%, and 47% of Canadians have reported feeling that gun violence poses a serious threat to their communities.

I am a born and bred downtown Torontonionian, and while most of my life Canada's largest city has been relatively safe, gun violence has been noticed and, as I mentioned, is on the rise. It is something we worry about because we hear about it in our communities and it makes us feel unsafe.

I was on a call with my staff this morning, who monitor all the social media and media in my riding. Yesterday, there was gun violence on the corner of Gladstone and Bloor in my riding. I do not know all of the details, but this is what I was able to garner from the news media:

One man was transported to hospital with serious injuries after being shot Friday evening.

It happened in the Bloor Street and Gladstone Avenue area just after 7:30 p.m.

The circumstances surrounding the shooting were not immediately known. Preliminary reports indicated that two shots had been fired, police said.

The victim...sustained serious, but non-life-threatening injuries....

Every incident like this makes our community members feel unsafe. It impacts our quality of life and it impacts our well-being.

I have been listening to the debate this evening, and I agree that tackling gun violence is not a simple issue. It is super complex. There is no one measure that will get guns off our streets, and this bill is definitely not a panacea.

It is also not our first action. I am very proud of all the actions we have taken over the last six to seven years to tackle gun violence.

I am really proud of Bill C-71, introduced during the 42nd Parliament. It was for registering firearms, providing additional due diligence practices, providing better supports for enforcement officers in tracing efforts and providing a number of additional measures that would keep firearms out of the hands of criminals. We also put a significant amount of money into our border officers in order to stop guns from crossing our borders, and heavily invested in tackling the root causes of violence.

There are other measures we have taken. Last May, we took the step of prohibiting more than 1,500 models of assault-style firearms and their variants. While the vast majority of firearm owners are responsible, these kinds of powerful and dangerous firearms are not designed for legitimate activities such as hunting and sport shooting. They were made for the battlefield and have no place in our cities at all. Taking that step put us in lockstep with other global leaders in gun control policy.

However, gun violence of all kinds continues to be a major problem in our communities and cities, as I mentioned. All firearm tragedies, from the public ones we commemorate to the private ones that occur in the home, create untold sadness and are often preventable. We acknowledge all those who have felt the tragic loss of a loved one and the loss of a sense of safety and security in their own community.

Gun violence remains a tragic reality that impacts our cities and regions. We only need to look at the Polytechnique tragedy, or what happened at the Quebec City mosque in recent memory, when a killer entered and murdered six people and injured many others. We also remember the massacre that happened in Nova Scotia.

No one should have their life cut short in this way. No one should have to live with the pain of losing a loved one to firearms violence. It is why we have made gun control a top priority, including by regulation and by legislation. It is why we stand with those who advocate relentlessly to increase safety in their communities. Their voices have deepened our resolve, and have helped to form our response in the form of this new legislation.

• (2245)

As I noted, since 2015 we have made some real and concrete progress to keep Canadians safe. We have introduced common-sense gun laws. We have invested in our law enforcement. As the Minister of Public Safety has said, we have also invested in kids and communities, because we know that makes a difference and addresses the determinants of crime and violence. However, there is always more we can do, and we must continue to address the root causes of gun violence to address the conditions in communities that lead to violence, and target the ways that guns get into the hands of people seeking to do harm.

For example, criminals can gain access to firearms in a number of ways. Some are smuggled across the border from the United States. Some are stolen from legal gun owners. Some are purchased legally by individuals who have the licence to make the purchase, but are then sold illegally through straw purchasing. Bill C-21 addresses all of these issues.

We also know that there are circumstances when a gun may be owned legally, but the circumstances of its ownership may change. It may be in a home where there are now incidents of gender-based violence and domestic violence. There may be a situation where a person suffering from suicidal ideation has access to a firearm, or it may be accessible to someone who has been radicalized to violent extremism. In those circumstances, we have to have the tools to enable firearms to be removed from a situation that is dangerous and made deadly by the presence of a firearm. That is another important element of Bill C-21. It is empowering Canadians to take action.

Situations involving domestic and intimate partner violence have been compounded by the pandemic. Beyond domestic violence, there are also other situations where a person may be suicidal or has openly advocated hatred or violence against someone.

*Government Orders*

In response, Bill C-21 proposes the creation of red-flag and yellow-flag provisions. These provisions would make it easier for anyone who feels threatened by the presence of a firearm in their home, or by an individual who owns a firearm, to take action to protect themselves and others. More specifically, the red-flag regime would allow anyone, not just police, to apply to the courts for the immediate removal of an individual firearm if it poses a danger. Similarly, the yellow-flag regime would allow anyone to ask a chief firearms officer to suspend and examine an individual's licence if there are reasonable suspicions that the person is no longer eligible to hold a licence.

As colleagues know, gun ownership in Canada is a privilege, not a right. It is a privilege earned by Canadians who adhere to our strict laws, our regulations and our requirements regarding licensing, training, storage and use of a firearm. In Canada, guns are only intended to be used for hunting and sport purposes.

Let me also acknowledge, as the Prime Minister has done, that the overwhelming majority of firearm owners in this country are law-abiding. They are responsible firearm owners. They acquire their firearms legally. They store them securely. They use them responsibly. They earn the privilege of firearm ownership, and we respect them for their adherence to these laws.

I know a lot of those individuals, not only in my own community but in the firearm-owning community in this country, and I can say that they are concerned with the safe use of firearms and restricting the access that criminals and people intent on violent crime can have to firearms. I believe they will understand the importance of the work we are introducing today to keep our communities safe.

All Canadians deserve to live in a place where they can be safe and secure. That is the objective of Bill C-21. As the Prime Minister has said, "we need more than thoughts and prayers. We need concrete action." That is exactly what Bill C-21 proposes: concrete action to stem the tide of gun violence in Canada.

I am very proud to support the bill at second reading and I hope my colleagues will do the same.

• (2250)

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the speech by the member for Davenport, and I have some sympathy for the challenges people in large cities like Toronto and in your riding face, as I lived for about 10 years in Leaside, not far from your riding, even though I am on the south shore.

In your speech, I think there were a couple of things that perhaps—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I will remind the member to address his comments through the Chair and not directly to the member.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Madam Speaker, the member mentioned a number of tragic incidents throughout Canada, the most recent of which was in Nova Scotia in Portapique. Those crimes were committed with illegal firearms smuggled across the U.S. border, not with legal handguns.

I am wondering, given this initiative, what percentage of crime in large cities with handguns will be reduced by this bill.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Madam Speaker, I would say that, while the hon. member used to live in Leaside, I lived on the other side of the railway track, so we lived in a more working class neighbourhood where a lot more violence and, I think, a lot more crime took place. A key intent of Bill C-21 is to absolutely cap the market for hot handguns. Individuals will no longer be able to buy, sell, transfer or import handguns.

I also have another message here, which is that there will never be more handguns in Canada than there are when this bill passes. Our goal is to absolutely eliminate handguns from our cities. There is no need for us to be able to have handguns in our cities. The fewer guns there are, the less gun violence there will be and the safer our streets will be.

• (2255)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague briefly touched on why this bill is important for cases relating to intimate partner violence. As the status of women critic, I am participating in the committee's study of a report on what goes on in certain intimate partner violence situations. The goal is to figure out how to reduce intimate partner violence.

One aspect of the bill I want to focus on is the immediate revocation of a licence for anyone under a protection order or involved in an act of intimate partner violence or harassment. That is obviously essential, but we cannot just tackle physical violence.

How can we expand the scope to emotional violence in order to include what is known as coercive control, a much broader concept of intimate partner violence? That is what I am getting from this measure. Is that what the member is getting as well?

[*English*]

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Madam Speaker, every time we take some additional steps, we better protect those who experience both gender-based violence and intimate partner violence. We need to never stop until we are absolutely sure that those who experience this type of violence and this type of threat are secure.

I will say that this is a key part of the reason why we are establishing the red flag and yellow flag laws. We are actually allowing a number of ways to go to the courts to be able to keep those who are experiencing gender-based violence and intimate partner violence safe.

*Government Orders*

This is just one of the many ways we are doing it. We will not stop until all women and those who experience this type of violence are safe.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member mentioned the red flag laws in her last response. I know there have been many stakeholders who have serious concerns about this because it still puts the onus on people who are victimized and who may not feel safe to come forward.

I am wondering if the government would consider doing more work around this and listen to the stakeholders.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Madam Speaker, we are at second reading right now. If colleagues agree and pass this bill, it will go to committee. I think that is the right place for us to be hearing from some of those experts. If there are parts of this bill that can actually be strengthened, we would welcome that opportunity.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is honour for me to be here this evening to join the debate on Bill C-21, a bill recently introduced by the government in an attempt to keep our citizens safe.

I will be sharing my time with the member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame.

In his opening comments, the Minister for Public Safety stated his wish that we would find common cause on this very important topic, and I was happy to hear the member for Davenport, the previous speaker, say the same. We are all in agreement that our streets need to be safer and our citizens need to be safe, and it is our job as parliamentarians to find ways for that to become a reality, because gun crime is a problem in Canada, despite fairly strict gun control laws over many decades.

Unfortunately, gun crime is up quite substantially since about 2014, and then there was another uptick with the start of the pandemic. Illicit drug crime and smuggling are also up. Toxic drug overdose deaths are also up. These are all real threats. Fortunately, the public safety committee has conducted a study into guns, gangs and illicit drug smuggling. I think that there is some very interesting information coming out of the study that is going to be useful for us as we develop laws and policies.

Illicit drugs are a real problem in Canada. Certainly they are a real problem in my hometown of Langley and in metro Vancouver. I grieve with a family friend, who is grieving the passing away of their adult son about a year ago in a toxic drug overdose death. They did not know he was addicted. They do not know where he got the drugs. He was a responsible citizen. He had a good job. He had a family. He had people who loved him. These seem to be the types of people who are caught up in this.

Guns are a real problem too. Just about a year ago, there were a series of gangland-style shootings in metro Vancouver, including in my riding of Langley, as I mentioned in an earlier speech. There was a shooting in broad daylight in which somebody was murdered right in front of the Sportsplex where my grandsons play hockey. It all hits very close to home.

In response to that shooting incident, and there were a series of them in metro Vancouver about a year ago, I asked a question in

question period of the former minister of public safety, which he then was. This was in the previous Parliament. I asked him what the government was doing about keeping our streets safe from gun crime. His response was that he was looking into the source of guns used in crimes.

The previous speaker mentioned exactly the same formula: Guns used in crimes are either stolen from lawful gun owners or are straw purchased, which means they are bought legally by a person who has a licence to purchase a gun, but it was bought for somebody else, probably for gang-related activities. Number three is that they are smuggled in from the United States of America.

I did not have a follow-up question with the minister at the time, but there is only so much information that can be exchanged in the 60-second question-and-answer period.

I thought I would do the research myself. I thought that would be a relatively easy answer to find. I wanted to know how many guns used in crime were stolen from lawful gun owners, how many were straw purchased, by percentage, and how many were smuggled into the country illegally?

I went to Statistics Canada and I found out that the answer does not exist. The data is missing. I went to the Library of Parliament and asked those folks if they could conduct some research for me. They did their best, but they came back and said that they do not really know, because there are a lot of gaps in the data.

I went to my local police force, and the police confirmed exactly that. They said that police services across the country are not required to trace guns used in crime, and that is if they can actually find the gun that was used in the crime.

There is another thing that I discovered: There is no standard definition for what a crime gun is. Is it the gun that was actually used in a crime in which somebody pulled the trigger, intending to harm somebody, or is the definition much broader than that? Does it even include guns in the possession of people who accidentally or inadvertently allowed their gun licence to lapse?

● (2300)

At the public safety committee, we studied this and the answers were all over the place. One person said that 80% of guns used in crimes were smuggled in from the United States. Someone else, also a very credible witness, said that 80% were sourced from home. When we dug into it deeper, we realized they were working from completely different definitions.

*Government Orders*

Statistics Canada came to our committee and we put the question to them. This is what they said, “At this point in time, we do not have national data” and “I cannot provide you with specific information”. Statistics Canada is acknowledging that there is a big gap.

It is such an important question, because if as parliamentarians we are going to develop laws that are designed to be effective in keeping people safe and accomplishing what we set out to do, we need to have good data. I asked myself if we have passed any other laws where we did not have the data. We have passed laws to try to manage inflation, housing affordability and the cost-of-living crisis, but we have a lot of data. Statistics Canada keeps data on those things. When managing a pandemic, of course we have data on that. We want to know how the virus spreads from one person to another. We base all of that on data.

Here we have Bill C-21 purporting to stop gun violence and we do not have the data. We do not know where the guns are coming from. I am very puzzled by that. This to me is the biggest problem. The government is presenting this legislation to people as being a means of keeping us safer and we know that is not the case.

In our study, we discovered that probably 80% of guns used in crimes have actually been smuggled in from the United States. We had a number of witnesses explain to us, to state the obvious, that Canada has the longest undefended border between two countries anywhere in the world. The United States is the largest manufacturer of guns. There are more guns in the United States of America than there are citizens. We know this is the primary source of guns that are used in crimes. They are smuggled across the river. They are smuggled across the Great Lakes. They are smuggled across border crossings in my riding at the Aldergrove and the Peace Arch border crossings.

This is what we need to do. We need to get better data. We need to work with the United States of America. This is not a problem we can solve by ourselves. We need to work with Homeland Security, get it to co-operate with us to try to stop the flow of illegal guns getting into the hands of criminals and gangsters. Very importantly, we need to tackle the root causes of crimes. We need to understand why young people are getting involved in gangs. We need to divert them away from that. We need to understand how toxic drugs are getting onto our streets. We need to be able to stop that. We need to be able to encourage people to get the mental health and addiction help they need.

Guns and drugs are so tied together that we cannot solve one problem without solving the other.

● (2305)

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I do not believe there is a quorum in the House.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Again, if the hon. member was not in the House a little while ago, I already ruled on that. There are no quorum calls during this debate.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Shefford.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke about the border. I know that this is an impor-

tant aspect of this debate. I was formerly the assistant to an MP whose riding was on the U.S. border, and I know that people can get very creative when they want to bring all kinds of things across the border.

This evening's debate reminds us that guns are obviously getting across the border. I am not referring to legal guns but to smuggled guns that are illegally imported by train or boat.

It was rather surreal today to see the Quebec public safety minister make an announcement about Akwesasne without a federal representative being present, given that the federal government should be contributing to and helping with this important fight.

I would like to remind members about my Bloc Qu b cois colleagues' idea of creating a joint task force whose members would all work together to crack down on illegal guns. What does my colleague think of that?

[*English*]

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, having guns come into Canada is a very complicated social problem and there is no easy solution. I do not believe that the CBSA can stop all guns coming in. As the member pointed out, they are being smuggled across the border by rail. Trains are not being inspected for guns. They are being smuggled in by boat across rivers and lakes. They are being smuggled in across unofficial, non-border crossings. We are not going to be able to stop it on our own. It is very important that we work together with American counterparts and Homeland Security and have them come to our assistance. This needs to be a team approach.

● (2310)

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the research that the member has done on the issue is admirable, as well as the work at the public safety committee.

What I am curious about is this. The member explained what measures will not work, but I would like to hear what measures will work. Often, when we have put measures in place, such as stronger background checks, the Conservative Party has opposed them. When we invested \$350 million in law enforcement to prosecute gangs and stop trafficking, the Conservatives opposed it. Would there be any kind of gun control measure that the Conservatives will not oppose?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, I am not a hunter or a gun person myself, but I have a lot of constituents who are and I speak with many of them. They are all law-abiding citizens and they are okay with gun control laws that make sense. They are okay with background checks. The RCMP does criminal checks. All of that is completely acceptable. That is all good policy, so laws around that I would completely support.

Also, we need to fully resource police services and community groups across the country that are focused on keeping kids out of gangs, as well as health supports for people with addictions.

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member spoke about some of the other challenges that Canadians and Canada are facing. I was just looking at one statistic. It says that there were 26,690 apparent opioid toxicity deaths in Canada between January 2016 and September 2021. There were 26,690 opioid overdose deaths in Canada from illegal drugs, yet the government is focused on spending billions possibly on buybacks, and so on.

Why can the government not put more effort into combatting illegal firearms and drugs coming into Canada?

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, I am assuming that is a rhetorical question, as I cannot answer why the government is not doing something, but I would completely support the underlying premise. We have discovered that illegal drugs and illegal guns are tied together. We cannot solve one problem without solving the other, and I am mystified as to why the government has not yet introduced a study into the source of fentanyl and carfentanyl that are killing people. It is completely unacceptable that 26,000 people have died. This is an advanced society and we need to find an answer.

**Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand here this evening to speak to Bill C-21, an act to amend certain acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms).

Certain elements of this bill are good and Conservatives, as always, will support common-sense gun laws that target criminals and gangs. We are the party that is focused on protecting victims of crime.

Earlier today, this side of the House presented a motion that would have sent certain elements of the bill to committee immediately, elements of the bill that focused on protecting potential victims of gun crime, elements of the bill that would tighten up gun laws that address gun smuggling.

One amendment to this bill included a red flag provision that would allow law enforcement to remove firearms from a dangerous domestic situation more quickly. I am in support of that. It is a common-sense amendment that this side of the House is in support of and was ready to send it directly to committee so it could be passed more quickly.

Domestic violence is something that we should not take lightly. This side of the House feels that if we can get this to committee, we are much closer to getting this passed and much closer to saving innocent lives. However, that side of the House blocked this from happening. I am not sure why that side wants to politicize the lives

of innocent men, women and children who are caught in domestic violence situations. Why?

Our motion also supported more severe penalties for criminals smuggling guns. Watching deliberations regarding the massacre in Nova Scotia, we heard some testimony that the man responsible for the shootings had guns brought over the border. We also heard that it was well known that the man had a vast selection of weapons.

Had there been tougher penalties for those illegal weapons, would there have been a different outcome? We will never know. I cannot, for the life of me, understand why the government would block such important measures. Why would it not want to take every opportunity possible to stop any occurrence of violent crime as quickly as possible?

Conservatives support the elements of Bill C-21 that are focused on protecting victims of gun crime and tightening up laws that address gun smuggling.

We know that gun crimes are not committed with legal guns or by law-abiding gun owners for the most part and represent a much lower proportion of violent crimes than those committed with knives or other weapons. We also know that the government has the means and ways to stop illegal guns from entering this country.

The question is why it is not stopping the illegal trade of firearms. If the government were as hell-bent on stopping illegal guns from getting into the hands of criminals as it is on keeping the useless travel restrictions in place, the streets of our cities would be much safer.

It is shameful that the Liberal government chooses politics over protecting victims and rejected our motion to immediately send those elements of the bill to the committee today.

Today's actions from that side of the House send a strong message that the Liberals are not serious about stopping dangerous criminals from getting their hands on illegal guns. Their actions tell me that they are not serious about making our streets safer. That is a shame, because the lives of so many are counting on the members of this House collectively to do the right thing.

The members opposite are simply not willing to back down on their political agenda and separate the ineffective and divisive parts of their bill that do nothing to stop gun violence and provide no benefit to vulnerable Canadians. I am confused.

When it comes to Liberal priorities, of course, they talk a good talk about gun crime, but the fact is the Liberals are going soft on real gun criminals and weakening the laws where it counts. For example, Liberals want a ban on pellet guns. I do not understand the mindset of the government. Do Liberals really believe a young person who owns a pellet gun is a criminal?

*Government Orders*

● (2315)

However, under Bill C-5, a gang member who is convicted of a violent crime would be allowed to serve his or her sentence in the very community that he or she terrorized. There is no mandatory jail time for those criminals. Let us stop and think about that for a minute. A violent offender has terrorized a person or a community and, rather than going to jail, that criminal can serve his or her time in the very community where he or she has committed the crime. This Liberal mindset is making our communities less safe and at greater risk for gun crime.

Since the Liberals were elected in 2015, gun crime has gone up steadily each year. For residents in cities like Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Winnipeg, gun violence is an everyday occurrence. The Liberals have ignored gun safety and put politics first at every step. This has come at an expense to everyday Canadians who are being victimized in their own communities by rising gun violence committed by gangs and dangerous criminals. Lives of innocent human beings are lost every day to legal guns used by criminals.

Canadians are tired of false promises. The Liberal government is more concerned about and focused on headlines and creating divisive legislation than the safety of Canadians. While the Liberal plan continues to fail and gun violence continues to grow, Conservatives will stay focused on common-sense firearms safety, tackling gun crime and making communities safer.

I grew up in a small community. Pellet guns were not considered a dangerous weapon, and I do not think any of the members across the aisle consider pellet guns or an airsoft rifle to be a dangerous weapon.

There are so many things in this bill that I cannot go along with. I have so many law-abiding gun owners in my riding who are feeling threatened by this legislation. Therefore, I move:

That the amendment be amended by adding the following: "and that the committee report back no later than 10 sitting days following the adoption of this motion".

● (2320)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The sub-amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. deputy House leader for the government in the House of Commons.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there have been a lot of references tonight brought up about illegal guns versus legal guns. Regarding having fewer guns in circulation, countries like the U.K., Australia, New Zealand and those that have taken really strong measures against guns in their countries have seen casualties reduced. Whether it is death by accident, mass shootings or homicides, they have all been reduced in those countries. The proof is looking at what they have implemented.

A lot of what the U.K., Australia and New Zealand have implemented is exactly what we have been doing by this measure and by the one that we took in 2019.

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Madam Speaker, I truly appreciate my hon. colleague's question. I know her heart is in the right place, and she is a good person.

In London, every year now we are looking at between 400 and 600 acid attacks. If criminals cannot access their illegal guns, they find a way. There are knives, and there are cube vans.

Legally purchased firearms by law-abiding citizens are not the problem. The government knows everything we do, including the last time we went to the bathroom, so it should know how illegal guns are coming into the country.

● (2325)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I will continue along the same lines.

A few days after Bill C-21 was introduced, Le Devoir conducted a little investigation to see if the handgun freeze would actually be effective or a good idea.

The journalists interviewed André Gélinas, a retired detective sergeant with the Montreal police service. Without hesitation, he said that this freeze will in no way solve the problem or reduce crime in this country. In fact, he believes the freeze is aimed at the wrong target, because handguns are smaller and lighter, making them the gun of choice for criminals. They are bought illegally and arrive from the United States, as has been mentioned several times this evening. According to Mr. Gélinas, in order to reduce the number of shootings and incidents involving stray bullets, we need to deal with illegal guns.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

[*English*]

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Madam Speaker, I really enjoy my colleague's speeches in the House, and I find her to be very knowledgeable on the topics that she speaks on.

On Bay du Nord, we are not quite on the same page, but I agree with her 100% that we need to target criminals who access illegal guns, and gangs, etc. The real problem is not law-abiding gun owners, responsible taxpaying, God-fearing Canadian citizens who make this country great.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame mentioned the Portapique shootings, which were devastating. I am from Nova Scotia, and the daughter of a friend of mine was one of the people killed.

The killer had so menaced the community that a number of people had gone to the RCMP. One of his neighbours actually picked up and moved away, because the RCMP was not protecting the neighbours who reported that this man had guns and appeared to be dangerous.

One of the briefs that I have seen so far on Bill C-21 suggests that we should reverse the onus of burden to show that one should be a legal gun owner, and that the onus should be on the person who wants to own the gun as opposed to on neighbours to report on that person.

*Government Orders*

I know there is a red flag in this legislation, and I will wrap up here, but what are the member's thoughts on what we should do to change the onus?

**Mr. Clifford Small:** Madam Speaker, I think my hon. colleague is in a different time zone than I am. I am on Newfoundland time, which is an hour and a half behind.

The red flag clause in the bill is a great clause, and I agree with the member.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for London North Centre.

It is my pleasure to speak on the laudable justice of Bill C-21, an act to amend certain acts and to make certain consequential amendments to firearms. The government has taken a multi-faceted approach to address firearms violence in Canada. Our ban on assault-style firearms on May 1, 2020 was a significant step forward in implementing a number of firearm policy commitments that were made in the Speech from the Throne in both 2019 and 2020. Bill C-21 builds on these commitments and other initiatives by addressing a multitude of factors that contribute to gun violence.

I want to start by addressing an issue that has been brought up so many times here today, the issue of illegal versus legal guns. I want to make it clear that the government is not targeting legal gun ownership; it is about creating safer communities for all Canadians.

As many of us have acknowledged here, and we have heard that the public safety committee has studied the issue as well, legal guns can turn into illegal guns. Since 2009, we have seen an increase, by three times, in the number of thefts of guns from legal gun owners. Those stolen guns then end up in the hands of criminals.

Also, statistics show that the more gun ownership we have, the more accidental shootings and deaths there are, accidents that are lethal or non-lethal. The stats show that Saskatchewan has the highest rates in the country of accidental shootings, next to Manitoba and then Alberta, followed by B.C. and then Ontario. I believe Quebec is one of the lower ones compared to the national average. That is something that could be decreased through this legislation.

As I mentioned a few minutes ago, there have been other countries that have addressed their gun violence with similar pieces of legislation, with similar reforms. We have seen, for example, that in Australia the rate of gun-related deaths fell by about 50%, and that number stayed there. That is remarkable. We have seen similar outcomes in the U.K. and New Zealand as well. That is really important to acknowledge.

Today, we have discussed where these guns are sourced from, and I appreciated the hon. opposition member's research into this, but I have also talked to many chiefs of police about the issue and I also used to sit on the public safety committee. There is a common understanding that over half of crime guns traced in 2020 were sourced domestically. They were either obtained legally or through theft and straw purchases, including 50% of handguns that were traced. For example, the shooting on the Danforth was with a legal firearm that was stolen from Saskatchewan and ended up being used in that mass killing, which was such an unfortunate incident.

Reducing the number of domestically sourced handguns that are diverted to the illegal market is part of our government's comprehensive plan to mitigate the deadly threat of firearm violence. This is a very important step.

The next thing I would like to address, which I know is a big concern for many members in the House, is the issue of gun smuggling. Reducing it is a key part of the government's fight to reduce access to illegal firearms. Firearms smuggling and trafficking are very often associated with organized crime activity and jeopardize public safety. Access to illegal guns enables the commission of other crimes, including drug trafficking. We must and will continue to take steps to address this, including by increasing the maximum penalties from 10 to 14 years of imprisonment for gun smuggling and trafficking.

• (2330)

According to a 2018 report from Toronto police's firearms enforcement unit, 70% of Toronto's crime guns for which sourcing could be determined came from across the border, compared with the 50% average between 2014 and 2017. That is why this step is so essential. Toronto police attributed the increase in foreign sourcing in 2018 to two large seizures by the guns and gangs unit. This has had a major impact on communities and provinces, which have called on the federal government to combat trafficking and smuggling.

Signalling the seriousness of these offences to criminals is of paramount importance in deterring these crimes. The proposal to increase the maximum penalty will also send a clear message to the courts that Parliament denounces these crimes.

Next I want to address Bill C-21's proposed red-flag regime in the Criminal Code, which seeks to prevent serious violence from occurring in the first place.

We want to prevent these incidents from happening by creating a new tool to temporarily remove guns from situations where violence may be possible. The new regime would allow any member of the public to apply to a court for an emergency weapons protection order that would prohibit or limit access by an individual to a weapon for a maximum of 30 days. It could go beyond that, if necessary, up to five years. The regime would also allow judges to hold emergency proceedings in camera or to redact or seal part of the record to protect the identity of the applicant or potential victims, another issue that was raised here today. We want to ensure that people feel safe to come forward.

The person making the application must have reasonable grounds to believe that another individual should not have access to a weapon because they pose a safety risk to themselves or to others. If a judge is satisfied that the grounds are met, they can make a temporary weapons prohibition order for up to 30 days. The removal of a firearm from an individual who poses a risk to themselves or others would provide the necessary time for authorities to undertake a full investigation and hearing. Following this, a determination could be made as to whether a longer-term prohibition is warranted.

This bill would also allow a member of the public to apply to a judge on similar grounds to seek a temporary limitation on access order of up to 30 days to prevent a person who is subject to a weapons prohibition from accessing firearms in the possession of another person. The order would be against the third person, who could be an acquaintance or a roommate.

Bill C-21 also proposes to address a gap in the law concerning replica firearms. These changes have been the subject of much attention since the introduction of the bill, so I would like to spend some time describing exactly what the bill proposes on this point.

The current definition of replica firearms, which has been in the Criminal Code since 1998, has two requirements: a device that exactly resembles, or resembles with near precision, a firearm, and that is not a firearm itself. Replica firearms are prohibited devices in Canada. Replica firearms are also considered imitation firearms, and the Criminal Code makes it an offence to use an imitation firearm in the commission of another offence.

Replica firearms are treated the way they are in our Criminal Code because the public and police are not able to distinguish them from conventional firearms, particularly in time-sensitive emergency situations. Sadly, we saw this recently in Scarborough. This is a very important part of what the bill is trying to address.

Many Canadians understand exactly the gap that is being targeted. It is quite simply this: a device that fires at a velocity of approximately 500 feet per second. That is addressed in this bill.

Finally, I will conclude by saying that through all the provisions in this bill, there would be a huge reduction in the number of firearms in Canada. I agree that we need to address this from several different angles, but the mere reduction that we will see once this bill is passed will have a significant impact, as we have seen in many other countries.

● (2335)

**Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in comments earlier, the hon. member across the way made it clear in her comments that the desire is to remove guns from our streets and have fewer guns in circulation. There are parts of Bill C-21 I agree with and my caucus agrees with, and we made the good-faith offer to split this bill, address those areas, get them through committee and get them enacted into law.

Why did the government reject that offer?

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Madam Speaker, I think it is so important for us to make sure we get the majority of this legislation through this House and the other place. In particular, the freeze on handguns is

essential. That freeze on handguns is one that the opposition is not in favour of, and as I have said previously, they are not in favour of our ban on assault rifles. In fact, they want to make sure that they can bring assault rifles back. We have seen that position in their previous platform, and many times when we have put forward legislation or proposals to restrict the use of firearms or the ownership of firearms, they have opposed them.

● (2340)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, as this evening's debate draws to a close, our interventions in the House demonstrate that we need to set partisanship aside and work together to move forward on the issue of gun control.

In that regard, I know that the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, who is a member of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, will work very hard to improve Bill C-21, including by bringing forward our proposal on handguns.

How does my colleague from Brampton North feel about the other suggestions my party has made? Earlier I mentioned the idea of creating joint task forces to crack down on illegal weapons, and my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord has introduced a bill to create an organized crime registry and expand the definition of organized crime.

It is important to remain open to other ideas and to work together to move this issue forward, setting aside criticism and partisanship.

[*English*]

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Madam Speaker, I think the member is absolutely right. We do need to work together, and our government has been making strides in this area.

We are working very closely with the Quebec government to reduce gun violence, and the Minister of Public Safety recently attended a forum in Montreal to understand the issue better. We have directed \$46 million under our guns and gangs fund to the Legault government and we are finalizing a transfer specifically for Quebec under our building safer communities fund to prevent gun crime.

I absolutely agree that we need to work together to address this issue, and that is exactly what we are doing.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member mentioned other countries and jurisdictions in her speech, and it made me think of the United States, which seems to be awash in handguns and guns of all kinds. We have not reached that point yet. It is a fact that when we go to the United States, we are not sure if the person sitting next to us on the bus has a gun. We are not at that point in Canada.

Would the member say this legislation is part of an approach to make sure we never reach that tipping point here in Canada?

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Madam Speaker, absolutely I believe in action, and what has been happening in the U.S.A. is very unfortunate. Many have called upon the government to act after a lot of mass casualties. We have seen so many, and just recently once again at an elementary school. It is heartbreaking, and I hope their government is able to pass legislation. I know they have recently passed it in the House of Representatives in Congress, but I hope the Senate will take this issue seriously and listen to all of those who have suffered from gun violence.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

In reference to the last Liberal speaker, I just want to point out and clarify that in the House she referred to assault rifles—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** That is a point of debate and not a point of order.

Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is almost midnight, and I see there are still a number of members of Parliament in the House and a number of us who have participated in tonight's debate, which is no surprise. This is an issue of fundamental importance, and we—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I do not think the parliamentary secretary pinpointed exactly who is in the House and who is not in the House, but I do want to remind members to perhaps stick to their speeches, as opposed to the surroundings of the House of Commons.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Madam Speaker, it was a compliment to the House. I am not sure where that came from. I always get along with my colleague on committee.

In any case, the point is that it is nearly midnight, and we are here debating an issue of such fundamental importance. The starting point for me begins with that fundamental truth, that the role and responsibility of any democratically elected government is to ensure the security and the safety of citizens.

Bill C-21 takes its cue from that. It is about confronting gun violence in Canada through enacting preventative measures that limit future violence. In the limited time that I have to speak on the bill tonight, I want to focus on two key aspects of the bill and then relate those to measures already enacted by the government, which I think highly complement what Bill C-21 offers.

Let us begin with a fact, a very clear fact about violent crime. We know that handguns are the weapon of choice for criminals. For example, in 2020, handguns were used in 75% of armed robberies and in 54% of sexual offences. Those are only two examples, and if I had more time, I could elaborate on those.

Recognizing this, under Bill C-21, if the proposed law goes ahead, the buying, the selling, the transferring or the importing of handguns would no longer be legal. That is an advancement in our society that is generational in terms of its importance.

We saw, a few days ago, a press conference where the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety spoke, but behind them were advocates, many of whom have experienced this in a deeply personal way. Their families have been torn apart by gun violence, completely torn apart, so their perspective informs this bill because the government took the opportunity to engage with them throughout to ensure that their point of view was represented. What I just read, with regard to this freeze of handguns, the freeze on selling, transferring, buying and importing, is reflective of their advice to the government through the consultations that took place. It ultimately means that the market for handguns will be capped.

The measure would see the number of handguns in Canada go down. As we just heard from our colleague from Brampton North, the reality is that, when there are fewer handguns in circulation, it means that society is safer. We will see fewer suicides, fewer homicides and fewer injuries caused by firearms, specifically handguns.

What about lawful gun owners? I think it is a very relevant issue. I know my Conservative colleagues have brought that up. What are the consequences for lawful gun owners under the bill?

Canadians who have a registered handgun, for target shooting, for example, could still use it. I emphasize that. I also emphasize that hunters are not the focus. Hunting is a Canadian tradition. People practice it, particularly in rural communities, but I have a number of constituents in my community of London, an urban area, who hunt. This bill would not apply to them, nor does it apply to sport shooters.

In case there is any confusion, and I know that if there is confusion, it is on the Conservative side, let me just reassure Conservative colleagues that Bill C-21 is not about hunters. It is not about sport shooters. It is not about those who currently own a handgun and target shoot, for example.

Instead, criminals are the focus—

• (2345)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Madam Speaker, the member is misleading the House when he says that this does not affect sport shooters. He obviously—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** That is a point of debate. The hon. member can raise that during questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Madam Speaker, I was just going to offer that to my hon. colleague. If he wishes, we can discuss it, but it is clear, in my view, that sport shooting is not impacted.

Another key aspect of Bill C-21 is the maximum penalty offences such as smuggling and trafficking would go up from 10 years to 14 years of imprisonment. That is an advance of great importance. It is something we have not seen before and is something I know many in the law enforcement community, as well as advocates, have been calling for. From a deterrence perspective, this matters. Taken together with what I just mentioned regarding the freeze on handguns, it complements very much what the government has already done.

I remind the House of those measures, fundamental measures, including the ban placed on no less than 1,500 models of assault-style weapons, including the AR-15. These are weapons designed to kill. One does not need an AR-15, for example, to go deer hunting.

Hunting, as I said before, is a fundamental Canadian tradition. I do not dispute that at all. I have hunted. The reality is that when we have assault weapons in our society, our society, by definition, is less safe. The only real voices championing the view that assault weapons have a place in Canadian society are the gun lobby, who found their way to make a real point to certain Conservative MPs. We saw what happened in the last election, where there was great confusion about the particular point of view on that issue in the Conservative platform, but I digress.

Providing more funding to law enforcement to tackle crime and gun trafficking in particular is something this government has carried out, as well as restoring funding that was cut under the previous government to the RCMP and to the CBSA so they can carry out that fundamental work at our borders. I do not dispute for a moment the important point colleagues have raised here tonight that what happens at the border is of great importance with respect to the issue of gun violence. There is no doubt about that at all.

We need law enforcement to continue its work. We need it to do more and we need to equip its members with the resources so they can carry out all of those responsibilities. This government has allowed them to do that by providing more resources. Of course, there is always more we can do.

I also see in this bill the enacting of wire taps that would be used in investigations relating to gun trafficking would be made easier. That is something that deserves emphasis as well.

Finally, with my remaining time, let me look at another aspect of great importance, which is the \$250-million fund announced by the government to deal with gang violence and its root causes. I understand under the bill that access to that funding by local non-profit organizations would be expedited such that in my own community of London, Ontario, for example, local organizations focusing on the root causes of violence and specifically violence that leads to crime, including gang violence, would be able to apply through their municipality, and ultimately to the federal government, for funding to deal with youth intervention programs.

As we know, early intervention is so vital to ensuring young people have the equality of opportunity such that they have a stream toward a more promising future. Other examples could be dealing with the causes of intergenerational poverty. We know there is a connection between gun violence, gang participation and intergenerational poverty.

### *Government Orders*

Fortunately, London has not been struck by a great deal of gang activity, but I know there are other communities throughout the country where gang activity is a real challenge. This fund, and ensuring that organizations have access to it in a very timely way, is important. I understand there will be an effort to move forward with funding in the coming months so organizations can apply and get access. This speaks to the importance of youth.

● (2350)

The perspectives of this bill make youth front and centre and ensure they are a major focus. I commend the government for putting forward a bill that does not ignore youth, because I do not think we could have meaningful legislation dealing with guns and ignore youth. From a preventive perspective, it is quite critical.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member opposite talked about how the bill would not affect the sport shooting community, so let us engage in a quick hypothetical.

Young children today observe their favourite Olympic sport shooter on TV and would like to get involved in that sport. With the freeze on the purchase of handguns, which will not affect the overwhelming majority of guns used in crimes because they are not used by law-abiding gun owners but by criminals who use smuggled guns, how would those children, once they become 18, get their PAL and RPAL? How would they get into sport shooting if they are never able to legally and safely acquire a gun for sport shooting?

● (2355)

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Madam Speaker, the member is very good, as usual, at citing hypotheticals, but he has not pointed at all to anything in the bill that would prevent someone from becoming a sport shooter. The critical thing is to take it back and focus on—

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** What would they shoot with? They need a gun. Be serious.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member had an opportunity to ask a question. If he has another question, then he should wait until asked for questions and comments.

I would ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to wrap up.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Madam Speaker, I am glad to provide my colleague with an answer. The answer is that Bill C-21 deals with criminal activity. For his purposes, though, to reassure him, authorized high-performance sport shooting and athletes and coaches are exempt in the bill. It is under the exemptions.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

I am not sure where the Conservatives are coming from. Perhaps they are borrowing from the Bill C-71 playbook from a few years ago where they made a concerted effort to mislead Canadians on this issue of what the government is doing to counter gun violence and criminality. We saw that then and I hope we do not see it this time.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind the parliamentary secretary that he cannot say indirectly what he cannot say directly. I would ask members in the House to be careful with the language that they use.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I was saying earlier that the government decided to proceed with a freeze that did not take effect immediately, but rather 30 working days after the announcement. This resulted in an explosion in handgun sales across the country.

It appears that the government realized this today. It tried to move a motion at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to refer the regulations directly to the House to speed up the process. The motion was blocked, so we did not get to debate it.

Does the government intend to come back with a similar motion so that we can push this process along before Parliament rises for the summer?

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Madam Speaker, earlier tonight the Minister of Public Safety spoke to that very issue. I welcome any ideas that can be put in place to counter the challenge and problem that my colleague has pointed out. There has been an increase, as we have seen in news media reports, in the purchase of handguns, so any suggestions to lead to a countering of that are worth exploring.

Again, I go back to the fundamental purpose of the bill. When organizations across the country, many of which have members whose lives have been destroyed because of gun violence, look at measures like a freeze on the selling of handguns, for example, among the other freezes that I mentioned, it is a good thing for the country. I point to the Association of Chiefs of Police. It agrees that public safety would be drastically improved with this bill.

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I tried to intervene earlier to say that the member was misleading the House when he said this would not affect sport shooters. It certainly would.

I have family members and friends who participate in the sport of cowboy action shooting. They are using antique firearms, some of them 100 years old and more. They will not be able to use these firearms. They are amateurs, but they compete around the world in countries like Australia and New Zealand. They are able to take their firearms there. Here the government wants to eliminate that opportunity.

How can the member say that and mislead the House?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind members not to use that word because it is saying indirectly what one cannot say directly.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has time for a brief answer because we are at midnight.

• (2400)

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Madam Speaker, as I said before, looking at the bill directly, I would advise colleagues, with enormous respect, to look at the bill before offering commentary on it.

Authorized high performance, sport shooting, athletes and coaches are all under the exemption category. This is the reality. I think it is very important to look at the substance of the bill and recognize that we have to do something to counter gun violence. The government has moved forward in a very important way, in a way that we have not seen in decades. I would advise Conservative colleagues, who are the ones that are really against this bill, to please—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** That is all the time we have.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in defending CORCAN's plan to rebuild the dairy herd at Joyceville and Collins Bay institutions, the minister and his parliamentary secretary have made claims that are completely divorced from reality.

Let us start with the minister's claim made in April. He said, "offenders who participate in [CORCAN] programs are three times less likely to reoffend and find themselves back in custody."

This would be impressive if it were true, but what Correctional Service Canada actually says is the following: "Offenders who were employed in the community [post-release]...were almost three times less likely to be revoked with a new offence than those who were not employed."

In other words, it is getting a job, not participating in a CORCAN program, that cuts the risk of reoffending. How likely is it that participating in a CORCAN program would help offenders to find a job? The answer is provided in the same Correctional Service document. It says, "Offenders employed with CORCAN were 1.09 times more likely than offenders employed in non-CORCAN institutional employment...to obtain a job in the community".

To be clear, participating in a CORCAN program decreases an inmate's chances of reoffending by only 9%. It is not by two-thirds, as the minister claims. Frankly, 9% is pretty good compared to what happens if an inmate has been in the prison farm program. In 2009, the departmental report stated that, over the previous five years, 99 of the 25,000 offenders released found work in the agricultural sector. That is less than one half of 1%. In three of those five years, only a single former offender found work in the agricultural sector in Ontario, where Collins Bay and Joyceville are located.

Let us turn now to the parliamentary secretary's idyllic description of the prison farm program at Collins Bay. She said, "I can think of few experiences that were more meaningful than engaging with the offenders who are participating in this program. These men were naming baby calves and bottle-feeding them and were well on their way to transitioning to a life free from crime."

If only this bore any resemblance whatsoever to reality. I note that the parliamentary secretary simply passed over the fact that, over a period of about a year, nearly 20 calves died in the prison farm for reasons officially characterized as "unknown causes". How these deaths affected these offenders is unclear.

Here is what is actually like to be involved in the prison farm program taking care of cattle. I am quoting from an inmate, now free to report on his experiences at a prison farm. He said:

When I had to go in a take a baby calf away from her mother...they knew what we were doing, and they were going to do whatever was possible to stop that...[and] that affected me. Of course it affected me.... They would cry, the mother and the baby would be talking to each other, and it's—oh my God. And you know that hurt, that affected me.

The Liberals assure us that all inmates who work at the prison farm are volunteers, and besides, they are paid. To be clear, they are paid a maximum of \$6.90 for a full day of work. One inmate noted that, after mandatory deductions were taken into account, it took him six months to save enough money to buy a pair of shoes.

Here is one other inmate's description of what it means to be a volunteer. He said, "I was quietly 'warned' by a...manager here at Collins Bay Medium that the warden would consider any decision to quit work...as going against my Correctional Plan.... So, essentially I have been coerced into continuing to carry out labour for CORCAN Industries."

This program is a disaster. Why do the Liberals not just admit it?

● (2405)

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my friend opposite for his interest in corrections.

We know that the rehabilitation of those who commit crimes is important for public safety, and it is important for the offenders' well-being. That is why we reopened the prison farms. It is good for public safety, it is good for inmates and it is good for the community.

I would ask him to ask the "save our prison farms" folks what they think about prison farms in their communities. I want to assure the member opposite that private industry is not benefiting finan-

cially from the involvement of inmates in the employment programs within their operations.

All revenues generated from these operations are invested directly into the offender employment and employability program. It is important that revenues from these operations are reinvested into the offender employment program because they have been found to promote rehabilitation and reintegration while reducing recidivism.

We have seen several research documents dating back to even earlier than 2014 that have noted a connection between employment and positive reintegration results. I would like to point out that the report previously mentioned by the member opposite also acknowledged that inmates who participate in CORCAN employment programs while incarcerated were more likely to be granted parole and more likely to get jobs in the community.

This report also acknowledges that offenders who were employed in the community were almost three times less likely to be revoked with a new offence than those who were not employed. The stats have shown that these programs work to foster and promote rehabilitation among inmates, which ultimately leads to safer communities for all Canadians. As such, inmates are encouraged to join them.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons aptly pointed out, these programs involve free consent and occur without threat of penalty. Inmates also receive payment for their participation in employment assignments, as well as other parts of their correctional plan, and their level of pay is reviewed at least once every six months and possibly adjusted based on their ability to meet the requirements of each pay level.

Employment programs are implemented in accordance with applicable provincial and federal government legislation and practices, and in accordance with industry standards. Canada is a founding and active member of the International Labour Organization, and also continuously works to meet its strict obligations that pertain to prison labour.

Lastly, I will touch on the abattoir. It is operated through a lease with a privately owned company and not by Correctional Service Canada. Each time this lease is due for renewal, CSC considers the options relative to continued operation. As it does regularly, it will continue to engage, as appropriate, with community members and stakeholders.

Our government is committed to reform in our criminal justice system to prioritize rehabilitation and reduce recidivism. This program is simply one aspect of this commitment.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments. It was very strange hearing him reciting back to me the same statistics I had just given to him. I pointed out that they been decontextualized by the minister. He simply repeated them. He repeated the same claim about being three times less likely to offend when one has been in a CORCAN program, which is just not true. Someone is one-third as likely to reoffend if they have found employment in a CORCAN program, which makes them 9% more likely to get employment, which is to say it is a very badly managed program if that is all it can do. CORCAN has this bizarre mandate where someone is working and it is treated as a kind of training in place of training. As a result, the training is simply ineffective at its intended purpose. He should know that, and I hope that his boss gets the message.

● (2410)

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Madam Speaker, we know that the majority of inmates will eventually be released back into the community. That is why employment programs, such as the ones operated by Correctional Service Canada, are important. They help offenders develop transferable, technical and essential skill sets to find meaningful employment. This not only helps offenders become law-abiding citizens upon release, but it also works to the benefit of Canadians, as reducing recidivism leads to safer communities. I am proud that the Government of Canada reopened the farms at Joyceville and Collins Bay institutions, and we will continue to support the CSC in its efforts to promote rehabilitation.

## FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise and bring the voices of Chatham-Kent—Leamington to this place, even if it is about 10 minutes after midnight.

I also appreciate the opportunity to follow up on the question I posed on April 1, with respect to Canada's obligations under the 1956 Great Lakes treaty with the United States.

My understanding specifically on the funding shortfall is that Canada had not paid its share of that treaty for seven years. I recognize that in the interim, the budget, when it was finally tabled, did include an additional \$9 million to cover this obligation, but members must excuse me if that does not give me the full comfort that this issue is now addressed. As I understand it, in 2017, the government made a similar commitment in a budget. A budget is just that, a budget. After the allocation was made to the DFO in the budget, DFO's internal priorities seemingly allocated these funds to other DFO interests rather than to their intended budgeted use.

That dynamic now leads me right into my second reason of concern, which is that the governance or the fiduciary responsibility of the commission is not operating correctly in Canada. This function needs to be returned to Global Affairs from the DFO, so that it mirrors how the accountabilities work in the United States. Because this is a treaty and not a program, this would remove the conflict of interest that the DFO finds itself in, in that it is presently in both a fiduciary and an operational role with respect to the affairs of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

It is too bad that the word “fishery” appears in the name of the commission even though the commission really does not have any

fisheries management jurisdictional responsibility, nor is the organization's mandate confined to fish. At its core, the commission is an independent body charged with fostering and maintaining cross-border collaboration and carrying out programs specific to the treaty rather than to any one federal or provincial agency, state department or U.S. agency.

The commission was established in 1955 to address exactly the inability of any state, province or federal agency to address complex Great Lakes management issues in the absence of a neutral coordinator, so having the DFO as both a fiduciary and a contractor for some of the programming puts the department in a very clear conflict of interest.

Lastly, the U.S. has voiced concerns that the Great Lakes Fishery Commission board has not been operating at its full strength, specifically its Canadian directors. In August 2020, the DFO declared the two Ontario seats on the commission to be vacant. Since then, the postings have gone unfilled. Moreover, because of an innate conflict of interest between his departmental responsibilities and his GLFC duties, one commissioner is unable to participate fully in commission affairs. Together, these factors mean that the Canadian section has been operating with only one fully engaged commissioner for 18 months and Ontario remains voiceless. While all of these members are striving to be diligent and effective, this situation is simply untenable. The sooner a full slate of commissioners are appointed, the better everyone will be.

Moreover, the two vacant positions are traditionally nominees from Ontario. The reason for that is obviously that Ontario has such a large interest in the Great Lakes fishing industry. Ontario made its nominations in November 2020, and the nominees have cleared all of the necessary background checks. At this point in the process, there would be no purpose in further delaying their appointment, because they would not be influenced, or there would be no effect, by any fiduciary change made in the governance of the commission.

When can we expect these changes to be implemented? When can we expect these appointments to be made, and when will the funding flow to meet our obligations?

• (2415)

**Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the government is committed to preserving our freshwater resources and protecting the Great Lakes from invasive species. The Great Lakes are important to the environment, the economy and the health and well-being of both Canada and the United States. It is for this reason that for 60 over years, Canada, in close partnership with the United States, has directly supported the work of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to combat the invasive sea lamprey, which are so damaging to the fishery, to invest in science and to facilitate efforts for sound fishery management to maintain an abundant fishery for generations to come.

The commission's efforts are vital in controlling the sea lamprey, conducting scientific research and maintaining co-operation among Canadian and American agencies in the management of the Great Lakes and its important fisheries. In fact, collaborative efforts between Canada and the United States through this commission have reduced the sea lamprey population in the Great Lakes by 90%. This work has directly facilitated the ongoing restoration of the traditional, ceremonial, commercial and recreational fisheries in this important region.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada plays a critical role across the Great Lakes through its responsibilities in managing impacts to fish and fish habitat under the habitat protection provisions of the Fisheries Act, implementing the aquatic invasive species regulations, delivering the Canadian portion of the sea lamprey control program for the commission, administering the Species at Risk Act and managing the Asian carp program. It is important to note that nearly 60 dedicated DFO staff are directly involved in the sea lamprey control program alone. Canadian and U.S. officials are working closely together with the commission secretariat to establish an annual work plan and associated budget to guide the sea lamprey control efforts and support related research and administrative costs, including the adoption of this year's budget.

We value the work that the Great Lakes Fishery Commission does, and that is why I was so pleased that budget 2022 allocated close to \$45 million over five years, in addition to the \$9 million for DFO, to support the work of the commission. What will this do? It will ensure the continued success of the commission in contributing to the health of the Great Lakes. It will help augment Canadian sea lamprey control activities, and support the commission's research agenda and binational fisheries management coordination efforts across the Great Lakes.

As officials conduct their analysis, we have continued to ensure that the work of the commission and DFO's ongoing delivery of the critical sea lamprey control measures are not adversely impacted or needlessly disrupted. I am very proud of what has been accomplished collaboratively by Canada and the United States in this forum, but of course stronger actions and additional efforts can always be taken. In this case, the auspices of the commission to control invasive species and ensure the sustainability and health of our prized Great Lakes are absolutely paramount. Our goal is to ensure that this commission is best positioned to fulfill its mandate and receive the necessary supports from our government to that very end.

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

**Mr. Dave Epp:** Madam Speaker, about 17 minutes ago, I entered my seventh decade of life. I turned 60 about 17 minutes ago, so I am going to ask the Government of Canada, through the parliamentary secretary, to consider giving me a 60th birthday gift, which is an answer to the questions I just asked.

Why, as the industry has called for, can the fiduciary responsibility not be transferred over to Global Affairs? When will that happen? Also, when will the committed \$9 million in funds flow?

Just as important is the governance structure that our American counterparts are asking for. When will the commissioners, which Ontario put forward 18 months ago, be named to the commission?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I wish the hon. member a happy 60th.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Mike Kelloway:** Madam Speaker, I wish the member a happy 60th, and I am glad to celebrate it with him at this time.

Speaking of 60 years, as I said earlier, for over 60 years Canada has had an amazing and close partnership with the United States, and we have shown a commitment to the preservation of the Great Lakes through the work of this commission. Again, the efforts of the commission are vital to controlling the sea lamprey, conducting scientific research and maintaining co-operation to manage the Great Lakes with efficiency and effectiveness. It is why we have invested almost \$45 million over the last five years, with \$9 million for DFO in addition to that.

For our continued success through DFO and for the funding needs of the commission, officials are regularly in communication with the secretariat. We will continue to work with the secretariat to achieve the outcomes that are best for the Great Lakes, best for the region and best for the country.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

● (2420)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan not being present to raise his question during the Adjournment Proceedings, the matter for which notice was given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

*[Translation]*

The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:20 a.m.)

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