



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, February 26, 2019

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 26, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)
[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to two petitions.

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. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1045)

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

(Division No. 996)

YEAS

Members

Aldag

Alghabra

Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fuhr
Gameau	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Hajdu	Hardie
Hébert	Hehr
Hogg	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Khalid
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	Ng
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan

Government Orders

Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Tabbara
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Trudeau	Vandal
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Allison	Anderson
Arnold	Aubin
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Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Blaikie	Block
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Cannings	Caron
Carrie	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Cooper	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeshen
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Eglinski	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast	Fortin
Garrison	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gourde	Hardcastle
Harder	Hoback
Hughes	Jeneroux
Jolibois	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Krmiec	Kusie
Lake	Leitch
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Marcil	Martel
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Poilievre	Quach
Raitt	Ramsey
Rankin	Rayes
Rempel	Sansoucy
Saroya	Scheer
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PAIRED

Members

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The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

BILL C-83—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-83, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another Act, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the report stage of the said bill and not more than one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the third reading stage of the said bill; and

That fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at report stage and 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 stage of the bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question that the government still has not answered with regard to the implementation of structured intervention units.

The government has said all sorts of good things about the segregation area but has never really explained the structure of it.

There is one thing I am trying to understand. If an area that is currently being used for administrative segregation is changed into a structured intervention unit, what will be the major physical difference between the two?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the legislation we are continuing to provide the correctional service with the authority and the physical system to be able to separate inmates from each other when that is necessary in the interests of safety within the institution. The existing infrastructure within the correctional system lends itself to that approach already in some cases. In others, there would need to be some physical modifications in terms of the actual structures.

Government Orders

To deal with the specific questions from the hon. gentleman, I would be happy to ask the correctional system to provide him with some design options so that he can see physically what the new arrangement would look like. He would see that it could accomplish the objective of providing separation when that is necessary for safety and security, at the same time allowing the programming to continue, particularly mental health and other counselling services that are necessary to ensure that the particular inmate or offender is properly managed within the institution. I would be happy to provide the member with some physical examples, if that would be helpful.

• (1050)

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here we have a bill that is a new iteration of dealing with solitary confinement. Bill C-56 was tabled almost two years ago, and then we had two court decisions that the government has clearly not complied with. Those two court decisions addressed abuses of what is called administrative segregation but is better known as solitary confinement in federal prisons. The courts found that the abuses were unconstitutional in different ways, and extremely troubling and problematic.

The government is not only appealing those decisions but also coming forward with a bill it is claiming would get rid of the practice altogether, when in reality, as every stakeholder has said, this is just the same practice under a different name. Every single witness who came to committee, barring officials from the minister's department, panned this bill. The corrections investigator referred to it as something that was not well thought out.

Therefore, two years after the first piece of legislation and with two appeals before the courts, why do the Liberals now all of a sudden feel the need to time allocate, when clearly both the consultation that was done and all the thought behind this bill were simply not adequate to address the types of human rights abuses we are seeing too often in our prisons?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, administrative segregation has been an issue the government and the correctional service have been dealing with over the course of the last three years. Obviously, we inherited a system that needed considerable fixing, so we are in the process of doing that.

As various items of legislation have been presented to the House, at the same time there have been court proceedings going on that predated the change in government. These are court proceedings that relate back to 2015 and even earlier. They have come to a decision time before the courts in the last number of months. As the courts have considered those matters that existed prior to 2015, a number of different prescriptions and requirements have been offered in the judgments in two different provinces. The hon. gentleman is right that both of those judgments are under appeal, one by the government and one by the other side. Therefore, it is a cross-appeal that is going on.

Obviously, it is important to meet the parameters set out by the courts, one of which is to get solutions to this situation in a timely manner, and the courts have set deadlines. Accordingly, it is important for Parliament to act in a timely manner to respond to the issues that have been raised by the courts. Therefore, allocating a certain number of hours to conclude the debate and get on with it is important in order to comply with the court judgments.

I would also point out that many of the amendments that are before us now at report stage deal with transparency, oversight and accountability, and there is broad agreement that these amendments would in fact improve and strengthen the legislation. Therefore, we are approaching the time when it is necessary to conclude the debate, vote and take a decision.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three and a half years ago, virtually every person in this House was subjected to candidates debates. The Liberal candidates would reiterate over and over again that if they were elected, they would form a government of consultation, openness and seeking input. However, in the entire process that has brought us to the report stage of this bill, whether it is the Correctional Service of Canada ombudsman, the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, indigenous groups or others, all of the stakeholders have indicated that the consultation that brought us to this point was totally inadequate.

Here we are at the report stage of the bill and the government, without any debate, has already invoked closure on it, limiting the ability of this side of the House to represent the communities we have been elected to represent, whether they be the correctional officers or the people in our communities. The safety of Canadians and our correctional officers is at stake, and to have closure placed on this bill is totally inadequate.

Why would the minister not only limit input from stakeholder groups during the consultation process but also limit the input of members of Parliament who were elected to represent their constituents here?

• (1055)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the bill is going through all of the normal parliamentary stages, including extensive work at committee, further debate at report stage with additional amendments being considered, and a third reading debate. Then, according to our parliamentary process, it will go on to the Senate for the appropriate consideration there. Therefore, all of the parliamentary steps are being properly complied with.

I would note that back in 2014, the head of the correctional officers union in this country at that particular time was quoted as saying, "We have to actively work to rid the Conservatives from power." He accused the Harper government of endangering correctional officers with prison overcrowding and cuts to rehabilitative programming. Some of that will be corrected by C-83.

I would also point out that the courts have said that to simply allow the present system of administrative segregation to expire in compliance with the court rulings, with nothing in place to replace it, would in fact make the system more dangerous. Therefore, all the measures in Bill C-83 are intended to address those very real issues that perpetuating the debate will not solve. Taking a decision will help us to come to a solution.

Government Orders

On the issue of consultation, I would point out that I have met with the correctional officers union on multiple occasions, both before and after Bill C-83 was introduced. This particular issue was discussed on every occasion.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the only bill in my experience where, as my colleagues have already indicated, not one witness who came to committee had anything positive to say about it, except for the minister's own officials. It is really unfortunate but that is the reality. The minister has just claimed that the bill responded to issues raised by the courts, and that segregation caused the unfortunate deaths of two inmates. Actually, if we look at those cases and study the court decisions, it is very clear that those unfortunate deaths were the result of operational and management failures in both of those circumstances.

The correctional officers union was one of the witnesses at committee, and so were former inmates. All of them testified that segregation is essential to managing volatile and violent offenders, and that the bill would create more risk to staff. Although the minister claims that public safety and the risk to members working in these facilities are important, I wonder whether this bill would actually do anything to improve their safety.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the bill clearly provides the power, the authority and the mechanisms to separate offenders in correctional institutions when that is necessary for the purposes of public safety. Therefore, the power would continue under the legislation to provide that kind of separation.

It also provides for the continuation of the programming, including of mental health and other counselling services, that is necessary in those institutions to achieve the ultimate objective of greater rehabilitation. This will result in a safer institution and a safer situation when those inmates are ultimately released.

The whole purpose here is public safety, including the safety of correctional officers, to ensure that our institutions are secure and that, to the maximum extent humanly possible, we are achieving the objective of rehabilitation that will make our communities, our society and the public safer in future.

• (1100)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister has been in this place for a very long time. I sat on the committee hearings with respect to this bill, which heard from a number of witnesses. A number of them came forward with suggestions for changes to the bill.

I would correct the hon. member from across the way: Stan Stapleton from the Union of Solicitor General Employees said he supported the bill provided investments were also made, and the government said they would be made alongside the legislation.

In your experience, minister, have you ever seen a committee make a—

The Speaker: Order. I have to remind the hon. member for Oakville North—Burlington to direct her comments to the Chair. Of course, when one says “you”, one is asking the Speaker a question, it would seem. I do not think she intends to do that. Therefore, perhaps she could rephrase that last bit.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the minister has ever seen such significant and important changes made to a bill based on testimony heard at a committee that was allowed to listen to testimony and amend the bill to reflect the testimony it heard.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, this legislation is probably unique in that regard. Quite frankly, I think that is a very good thing.

We are dealing with an issue here that should not be partisan in nature. The proper functioning of our correctional system and the need to have a successful system that produces a safer society is an objective all of us share, I am sure. Therefore, it is a very good thing that the standing committee heard from witnesses, received advice, information and recommendations, and took the initiative to make a number of amendments to the legislation to improve it, consistent with the advice and testimony that were presented to it.

That process continues at report stage, where further amendments have been added, particularly on the important issue of oversight and review. This is a good example of the House and its processes proceeding in the way they were intended: to listen to the evidence, to draft amendments in response to the evidence, and to implement those amendments according to what the witnesses recommended.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here we are again. I do not know exactly, but the number of times the current government has invoked closure is probably well in the sixties now. Again, I will bring us all back to day 10 of the 2015 campaign, which we have to do time and again, where the member for Papineau at that time said he would not resort to parliamentary tricks such as limiting debate. He would let debate reign.

The president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers said that while Bill C-83 may have been well intended, these changes fall short as they are not feasible under the current staffing and infrastructure models. Many of the inmates currently managed within segregation units are highly vulnerable and are segregated for their own protection. The same president also expressed serious concern for the safety of the correctional officers and the work they are doing, and felt that Bill C-83 was falling short in ensuring that.

We should always ensure we are doing everything in our power to put the necessary tools in the hands of those who are protecting not only the mental well-being but also the physical well-being of the public and Canadians. Bill C-83 falls short in that regard. Witnesses who gave testimony all commented on that, with some very powerful messages from the president of the union of correctional officers. I would like to ask our hon. colleague, the minister, how that concern has been addressed by limiting debate on this important piece of legislation.

Government Orders

•(1105)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, a number of people, including union representatives and expert professionals within and outside the correctional system, have made the observation, as the hon. gentleman said, that the transition to the intervention units, identified as SIUs in the legislation, is good in principle, but we need to ensure the resources are there, financially and otherwise, to run the new system properly and effectively.

In that regard, I informed the standing committee last fall that in the fall economic statement a total of \$448 million were allocated over six years for the implementation of the legislation. That includes about \$300 million for staffing and other resources specifically for the SIUs, and \$150 million for mental health care improvements in the SIUs and throughout the correctional system. Moreover, there was a pre-existing \$80 million for mental health care for Correctional Service of Canada in the two federal budgets prior to the fall update.

With respect to resources being made available, yes, that is an absolute requirement and, yes, the funding has already been allocated.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has quite a history when it comes to public safety. He was one of the senior ministers who led the attack and jailing of farmers who simply wanted to sell their own grain. A number of them ended up in jail. He is now working behind the scenes to target legitimate handgun owners.

When it comes to criminals, we do not have to look any further than the Terri-Lynne McClintic transfer. He and his government transferred a lady from a maximum-security prison to Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, a minimum-security prison in my riding.

Why has the member so consistently targeted law-abiding Canadians while insisting on coddling hardened criminals and shutting down debate on this bill?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the question is a complete non sequitur. Moreover, its fundamental premise is absolutely flawed. There is no relationship between the issues that he raises in his question and what is in Bill C-83.

Bill C-83 and the amendments that are now before the House are intended to make our correctional system safer and more successful in keeping society safe and secure. The amendments that we are now considering at report stage have to do in large measure with review and oversight to ensure our correctional service has the power and authority to run the system in a way that keeps the system safe and that respects the needs of those in the institutions. This is to ensure that, to the maximum extent possible, rehabilitation can be achieved.

If we reject the objective of rehabilitation, we are saying that when sentences expire, we should release inmates willy-nilly, with no concern for future public safety. That is surely a formula for disaster, which the official opposition seems to embrace.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety talks a lot about the safety and concern for the correctional service officers. However, in his departmental plans for Correctional Service of Canada, on which the minister signed off,

there is not one single goal or mention regarding the safety or welfare of correctional service officers.

There are obvious criticisms regarding Bill C-83 about making things more dangerous for workers. He stands again and again to talk about safety. Why has he neglected to mention even once in his plan the safety of correctional workers?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, I have mentioned that objective repeatedly, including the provision of very nearly half a billion dollars over the next six years for the successful implementation of this legislation. That includes \$300 million for staffing and other resources specifically related to the SIUs.

That obviously demonstrates a very proactive response to a number of the issues correctional officers have raised to ensure they have the resources, the staffing and training necessary to administer these new provisions in a successful manner and in a manner that keeps them safe.

•(1110)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this legislation underscores the difference between a Conservative approach to corrections and a Liberal approach.

As Liberals, we believe in integration and rehabilitation, knowing, as the minister said, that at the end of the day inmates are going to come back out into society and we want them to be transformed into productive and contributing members of society.

Since this is such a significant overhaul of the legislation, could the minister comment as to where he sees the benefits for inmates at the end of their sentences, as they seek to be rehabilitated into our societies?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, in the past, the offenders who tended to become involved in administrative segregation were obviously the ones who were very often the most difficult to manage and the ones with the least prospects of successful rehabilitation.

The fact is that under the existing system of administrative segregation, once an offender is put into those circumstances, all the programming aimed at rehabilitation, changing their behaviour, making their conduct more safe for the rest of society, stops. It is physically impossible to provide that kind of mental health treatment, or other counselling or other types of programming in the existing arrangement for administrative segregation.

The correctional service tries its best to continue with those services and programs, but it is very difficult to do it under the rules of administrative segregation. By transforming the system to the new intervention units, the system will be able to achieve the same kind of safety provisions, but without cancelling the programming that is aimed at changing the behaviour, accomplishing rehabilitation and making the ultimate release of those offenders more safe when their sentences has been served.

The legislation, indeed, leads to a much safer situation, both for those who are running the institutions and for the public generally.

Government Orders

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. minister about one of the witnesses who testified, Senator Pate. She testified before the committee and indicated that the legislation, Bill C-83, as presented and as amended was bad legislation.

Senator Pate did a very good job of dismantling the claims of the minister and the bill on what segregation would do at the end of the day. Her experience in Nova Scotia was that one of the prisons she visited had renamed a segregation unit to the intensive intervention unit. However, at the end of the day, it did not change anything.

It appears as if whatever overhaul was intended with this legislation, changing the name of a segregation unit to the function of it is not necessarily what is going to happen in the bill. The costing has never been done for the legislation either.

Would the minister enlighten us on exactly how, other than potentially changing the paint and the name of something, it will actually make a difference in what we are trying to achieve with rehabilitation, still keeping in mind the protection of our guards and other inmates, and the rehabilitation of the prisoners who are there?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, first, the legislation would provide for greater time outside the cell for the person who is in a structured intervention unit. In fact, the time outside a cell is doubled. The interaction with human beings is increased. The programming related to rehabilitation, mental health services and other sorts of counselling, training and education continues, all of which is fundamentally different from the idea of administrative segregation. The whole fundamental approach changes with the SIUs.

Second, the funding that is necessary to make that change is specifically being provided and allocated in advance. It was in the fall economic update: \$448 million, on top of \$80 million that were in the previous two federal budgets. A very substantial financial commitment is being made to ensure the theory of a structured intervention unit is lifted off the page and actually implemented.

One of Senator Pate's major concerns had to do with oversight, accountability and transparency, and the very amendments that we are considering at report stage address that critical concern of hers.

• (1115)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, in addition to the criticism that inadequate consultation occurred, one of the pointed criticisms of the legislation is that far too much is left to the regulatory process.

As co-chair of the scrutiny of regulations committee, I can attest, and there are colleagues here from that committee, such as my colleague for Laval—Les Îles who will attest to this as well, that too often in the scrutiny of regulations committee we are faced with regulations that have been written but do not have the adequate legislative authority to be implemented. Therefore, it is critical that this place, the legislature, gets it right before it is left to the regulatory bodies to write the regulations.

I wonder how that can possibly enhance the process of this good legislation to which my colleague refers if, in fact, we have inadequate time to debate the legislation so the regulatory-writing body gets it right.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the greater danger is to talk this process to death so that at the end of the time established by courts the existing system of administrative segregation expires with absolutely nothing in place to replace it. That would be very foolish.

It is important for Parliament to do its work, to do it in a thoughtful, conscientious and thorough manner, which is part of what we are doing right now, and at the end of the day to vote and take a decision to implement a new system, with the funding that has already been allocated, to make our system more successful, more secure and safe for the future, with better correctional results for society.

I have every confidence that the safeguard institutions we have put in place, including the Standing Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations, will be able to do their jobs properly to ensure the content of the legislation is properly implemented.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, recently, Canada's youngest serial killer, Cody Legebokoff, was transferred from maximum security to medium security without acknowledgement or notification to two of the families of the four victims. Cody Legebokoff heinously murdered four young women in our communities in Cariboo—Prince George. He has not admitted guilt and has not formally told the victims' families where the remains of the victims are.

I would ask my hon. colleague across the way if he will review this case of the transfer of Cody Legebokoff, Canada's youngest serial killer, from maximum to medium security.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the particular item raised by the hon. gentleman obviously does not relate to Bill C-83, but on the substantive issue he has raised, I will examine the facts and get back to him with further information.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1155)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 997)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fuhr
Garneau	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Hajdu	Hardie
Hébert	Hehr
Hogg	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Khalid
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Levitt
Lighthbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	Ng
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha

Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schieffe	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Trudeau	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
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Chen
MooreHarvey
Thériault— 4**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

[English]

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed from February 21 consideration of Bill C-83, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of proceedings on the time allocation motion, Government Orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

● (1200)

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth) and to the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise to speak to Bill C-83.

[English]

It is a transformative piece of legislation for our correctional system. Its ultimate goal is to promote safety, both inside and outside our federal institutions, and it prioritizes rehabilitation as an indispensable part of achieving that goal.

The core innovation in Bill C-83 is the proposed introduction of structured intervention units, or SIUs. These SIUs would address a reality in any prison across our country, which is that some inmates are, at certain times, simply too dangerous or disruptive to be safely housed in the mainstream inmate population. The current practice is to place those offenders in administrative segregation.

Segregated inmates in federal institutions can be in their cells for as many as 22 hours a day. Interactions with other people are highly limited. Bill C-83 would offer a more effective way forward for all involved.

Safety will always be priority number one for our government, and should be for any government in power, but prisons are safer places in which to live and work when inmates receive the programming, mental health care and other interventions they need. Inmates who receive these interventions are more likely to reintegrate safely into the community when their sentences are over.

The solution the government is proposing in Bill C-83 is to eliminate segregation and to replace it with SIUs. These units would be secure and separate from the mainstream inmate population so that the safety imperative would be met. However, they would be designed to ensure that inmates who were placed there would receive the interventions, programming and treatment they required.

Inmates in SIUs would be given the opportunity to leave their cells for at least four hours a day, as opposed to two hours under the current system. It is worth noting that currently, those two hours are

set out in policy and not in legislation. Bill C-83 would give the four-hour minimum the full force of law.

Inmates in SIUs would also have the opportunity for at least two hours of meaningful human contact. During that time, they could interact with people such as correctional staff, other compatible inmates, visitors, chaplains or elders. The goal of these reforms is for inmates in an SIU to be in a position to reintegrate into the mainstream inmate population as soon as possible.

Bill C-83 has undergone rigorous analysis at every stage of the parliamentary process to date. Members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security went over it with a fine-tooth comb. Based on testimony from a wide range of stakeholders, a number of useful amendments were adopted at the end of the committee's study period.

Bill C-83 was a solid and worthwhile bill from day one. It is now even better and stronger for having gone through vigorous debate and a robust review process. It is worth noting that the bill that has been reported back to us reflects amendments from all parties that proposed them. I wholeheartedly reject the idea we have heard during this debate that somehow the fact that the bill has been amended in response to public and parliamentary feedback is a bad thing. I am proud to support a government that welcomes informed, constructive feedback and that respects the role of members of Parliament from all parties in the legislative process. I would like to thank all members in this House who contributed to amending and making this bill better than it was.

Most of the amendments made to Bill C-83 are about ensuring that the new SIUs would function as intended. For instance, some witnesses were worried that the opportunity for time out of the cell would be provided in the middle of the night, when inmates were unlikely to take advantage of it. Therefore, the member for Montarville added the requirement that it happen between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m.

● (1205)

Other witnesses wondered whether the mandatory interactions with others might happen through a door or a meal slot, a reasonable concern. To address that concern, the member for Toronto—Danforth added a provision requiring that every reasonable effort be made to ensure that interactions are face to face, with a record kept of any and all exceptions.

To address concerns that CSC might make excessive use of the clause allowing for time out of the cell not to be provided in exceptional circumstances, the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore added a list of specific examples, such as fires or natural disasters, to clarify how this clause should be interpreted.

Government Orders

Amendments from the member for Toronto—Danforth at committee and from the member for Oakville North—Burlington at report stage will enhance the review process so that each SIU placement is subject to robust oversight, both internally and externally.

All of this will help ensure that the new structured intervention units operate as intended.

However, that is not all. Amendments have also been accepted from the members for Brampton North, Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, Beloeil—Chambly and Saanich—Gulf Islands. I would like to thank them once again for their contributions as well.

We all want safer institutions and safer communities. We all want Canadians to feel safe and to be safe. Successful rehabilitation and safe reintegration of people in federal custody are key to achieving our shared objective of enhanced public safety. By allowing inmates who must be separated from the general prison population to receive more time out of their cell and more mental health care and rehabilitative interventions, Bill C-83 represents a major step in the right direction.

Again, I would like to thank all of my hon. colleagues for their contributions in the House and at committee throughout the entire parliamentary process so far, and I urge them to join me in enthusiastically supporting this bill. It will ensure the safety of the inmates and those who work in the correctional institutions, and Canadians as well.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that really touched me when we were hearing from the witnesses was the need for robust oversight. That is the glue that holds everything together. We need to build trust when we are working with a new system. We are creating something that no one has really worked with before, so how do we make sure that people believe this is in fact going to work as a new system of structured intervention units?

I would like to hear my colleague speak about how that oversight provision and the office of the correctional investigator can help to build the trust that the system will be working correctly.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we need proper oversight in this process. We were grateful to have the testimony of many people working in correctional facilities who pushed for these kinds of oversight. As well, many in organizations that were looking for more oversight throughout this process came and testified at committee and met with members of Parliament from all sides of the House. That is a core component of the legislation that we have put forward.

I would also like to add that it is important to develop trust among players involved in this system. We have been able to do that by making them a part of the process so far of developing the proposed law, Bill C-83, and also by listening to them and ensuring that they have the resources in place through new investments and investments that have been already put in place to ensure their safety as we put in place this new methodology to deal with those particular inmates.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister this morning described that \$448 million is

allocated to Bill C-83 over the next six years. We know that a considerable amount of infrastructure renovation would be required to meet the requirements laid out in Bill C-83.

Of the portion of money that has been set aside for the infrastructure rebuild, could the parliamentary secretary please advise the House as to how much is actually going to go to the services provided and to the correctional officers' requirements in playing out all of Bill C-83?

• (1210)

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again thank my hon. colleague for his work in amending this bill, making it better and improving upon it.

My hon. colleague is correct that \$300 million has been set aside for resources for the SIUs, including \$150 million for mental health, and as he mentioned, over \$80 million is already in place.

The reality is that those funds are needed. We heard loud and clear from those who testified, as well as those who met with us individually, that in addition to having this measure in place, those who ran correctional facilities wanted to make sure that resources would be in place to ensure we are doing right by those working in these facilities in making sure they are being kept safe. We have been able to do that here.

We have also been able to allocate some funding toward improving the infrastructure in these facilities to ensure they have the infrastructure to keep the correctional staff safe, as well as to do right by the inmates who are going to be moved into these new facilities.

This is all to say that this was a whole-of-government approach. A lot of times in this House we fiercely debate and are fiercely opposed to different laws being put in place, but this is one time when I was very happy to see all parties come together to put in place a law we can all agree on, a law that would keep Canadians safe, as well as those doing the hard work in those correctional facilities.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this new chamber to speak to Bill C-83.

When this bill was introduced, it was an important piece of legislation. However, what is even more important is that the parliamentary process has helped enhance this very important bill.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members who have participated in the debate, who provided information and who shared their views.

The witnesses were also helpful. Some came to us, while others provided additional information in writing that helped us improve this bill as much as possible. All of these contributions will help build a safer and more effective correctional system, which is essential.

I also want to point out that more than 100 amendments were proposed. This means that there were a lot of discussions on this bill. I should also note that every party was able to contribute to these amendments in one way or another.

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One of the amendments was about broadening the scope of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to ensure that correctional policies, programs and practices respect religion, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and the special needs of visible minorities. Those are very important aspects.

Another amendment was about making every reasonable effort to provide inmates in structured intervention units with human contact, which is very important to their mental health. Some felt it was important to give individuals in structured intervention units a reasonable amount of time outside their cell. That does not mean waking inmates up at 2 a.m. or 3 a.m.; time outside the cell must be between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m.

In terms of health care, the bill provides further assurances to inmates by requiring an additional review when the institutional head disagrees with the recommendations of a health professional with respect to altering the conditions of an inmate's confinement or removing the inmate from the unit.

I am very pleased to say that the bill will be reviewed every five years. This is another approach our government has been taking since 2015. We are bringing in legislation that provides for reviews and allows for improvements to be made. This will give us an opportunity to examine the bill's implementation and make the necessary changes.

The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness also mentioned that the government would be open to an important addition, specifically, external oversight. The member for Oakville North—Burlington moved that amendment at report stage, and the government has signalled its intention to support it. This addition will address one of the main concerns raised during testimony in committee. It is also very important to ensure that the necessary resources are put in place to move this crucial bill forward. I will explain in my speech where we have made those investments.

The national president of the Union of Safety and Justice Employees, Stanley Stapleton, shared this sentiment. I am delighted to say that the government also took his calls into account.

●(1215)

The Minister of Finance of Canada announced a \$448-million investment in corrections in the latest fall economic update. A large part of this money will be put towards the provisions of this bill.

As the Minister of Public Safety pointed out, this funding will ensure that the Correctional Service of Canada will have properly trained staff at the right time and in the right place. This investment also includes \$150 million for extensive improvements to mental health care in prisons. This money is in addition to the considerable investment of almost \$80 million that was announced in our government's last two budgets.

In other words, the government has followed through on its commitment to ensure that the corrections system holds offenders accountable for their actions but also supports their rehabilitation in a safe and secure environment. The goal is to have fewer repeat offenders, fewer victims, and ultimately, a safer country.

Bill C-83 will strengthen the federal correctional system by implementing a new intervention model, improve health care

governance and victim support services, and better take into account the specific needs of indigenous offenders. That is very important. What is more, it will eliminate administrative segregation and make way for patient advocates, as recommended in the coroner's report on the death of Ashley Smith. It will also enact less intrusive alternatives to strip searches and body cavity searches.

The bill will help better support the role of victims in the criminal justice system by guaranteeing them access to audio recordings of parole hearings. This is a marked improvement over the former system, under which only victims who did not attend the hearing could obtain an audio recording. Now victims who attend will also get the recordings.

The bill also enshrines into law the principle by which health care providers at correctional institutions will have to make decisions based on their medical judgment, independently of correctional authorities. The bill also enshrines in law the principle that offender management decisions must involve consideration of systemic and background factors related to indigenous offenders.

In summary, we drafted a comprehensive bill that will strengthen the security of our institutional staff, inmates and our communities. It will make it possible for Correctional Service Canada to separate certain offenders while ensuring that they receive the interventions required. It will also improve the quality of their rehabilitation.

Once again, I want to thank all members who contributed to this important bill. Its passage through the House so far demonstrates what can be done when members from all parties work together to pass legislation that will help the community. I am proud to support Bill C-83 today, and I encourage members of the House to do so as well.

●(1220)

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers president, Jason Godin, told the public safety committee that “by eliminating segregation and replacing it with structured intervention units, CSC will further struggle to achieve its mandate of exercising safe, secure and humane control over its inmate populations.” Mr. Godin went on to say, “The bill was as much a surprise to us as it was to anybody.”

Can the hon. member opposite explain how the correctional officers' safety is being considered within the bill when they were not even consulted on it?

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Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to quote Mr. Godin. He is the president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers. He also said that to put this together, what is really crucial is that the investments follow and we make sure that our government is putting those investments in to ensure that this law can proceed and to ensure the safety of the employees and the safety of the individuals in the correctional centres.

Again, our government has come forward with \$448 million to help move this process along, which is crucial. Bills cannot be put out there if they do not have the funding to support them and to ensure that the implementation is put in place.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well that Bill C-83 had to be brought in because of superior court decisions in Ontario and British Columbia that found the current segregation policy to be unconstitutional.

In the two rulings handed down in Quebec and Ontario, recommendations were made and put in writing to explain their decision and to guide future government policy or legislation.

Bill C-83, however, fails to implement most of these recommendations, and I would like to ask my colleague why that is.

Why did the government refuse to consider the recommendations of the judges, who ruled that the situation was unconstitutional?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He raises an interesting point about the decisions from Ontario and British Columbia, which certainly raised certain issues.

However, we added two measures to alleviate segregation. First, the hours when the inmates can leave their cells are between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. That is a very important measure, one that I think will ensure a greater degree of success. There is also the whole issue of human contact. These additions to the bill will support the segregation issue.

I also want to mention that the parties brought forward over 100 amendments and that amendments from every party were accepted. That means the entire House has a hand in the bill's success.

• (1225)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am impressed by my colleagues' speeches and by the fact that the amendments came from every party.

I would like to ask my colleague which measures involve the correctional officers and health care professionals who work directly with the inmates.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. As we know, the people working in these institutions have contributed to the success of this bill. Consultation was an important component for us.

We also injected funding to ensure that the necessary safety infrastructure was in place so these people could do their work. If a recommendation with respect to health is submitted to the head and is not accepted, a second will follow.

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address Bill C-83. As we know, it is a bill that symbolizes the current government's approach to leadership in this country. It is an approach of ignoring the concerns of many, providing little in the way of moral leadership and transparency, and putting the safety of Canadians at risk for the benefit of political gain.

I have said many times in this place that it is and should be the top priority of the House to put the safety of Canadians first, ahead of any other issues or politics. With the bill, the House would fail to meet that expectation.

To paraphrase my NDP colleague from Beloeil—Chambly, I can think of no time when a bill has come before Parliament where there are no witnesses who support the legislation. That is exactly what happened with Bill C-83. The minister claimed the bill would end administrative segregation. The witnesses who refuted the bill included prisoner advocacy groups, civil liberties groups, former wardens, professors, correctional unions, the correctional investigator and a senator. The overriding sentiment was that the legislation lacked the detail and information needed to back up such a claim by the minister.

The minister claimed the bill responded to issues raised by the courts that segregation caused the death of two inmates. However, the facts are clear in these two unfortunate deaths that they were the result of operational and management failures in both circumstances.

The minister claimed safety and security of staff were the top priorities. However, correctional workers and former inmates testified that segregation is essential to managing violent and volatile inmates, and that the bill would create more risk to staff.

Civil liberties groups called the bill unconstitutional and said it would make things worse rather than better. They noted the bill lacked external oversight, a check against the authorities of Correctional Service Canada. The minister actually acknowledged this lack of oversight existed.

Senator Pate testified before the committee and indicated that Bill C-83 was a bad piece of legislation. The senator dismantled the minister's claims as to how the bill would end segregation. In a visit to a Nova Scotia Prison, Senator Pate noted that it had renamed the segregation unit, the "intensive intervention unit". The minister will claim otherwise, of course. However, I will take the testimony of a senator and her eyewitness account over the minister's promise, especially given the minister's repeated track record of misleading Parliament and Canadians.

Perhaps the only accomplishment by the minister with respect to the bill is that he brought together the NDP, the Green Party and the Conservatives, who all oppose the legislation.

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I would like to note the unexpected and very valuable contribution of written testimony from Mr. Glen Brown, someone who knows the system well. Mr. Brown is a highly experienced former warden and deputy warden, who now teaches criminal justice and criminology at Simon Fraser University and Langara College.

As someone once responsible for segregation units, he notes that the Ashley Smith and Edward Snowshoe cases were more about mismanagement of behavioural issues and neglect. These issues are not legislative problems. They are management, training and accountability issues. When in segregation, inmates should receive bolstered communication on current risks and mental health issues. They should have increased contact with officers and staff, and they should have an increased potential for services. All this should bring greater attention to an offender's rehabilitation plan.

Mr. Brown wrote:

The strength of a functioning administrative segregation process is that it should bolster all of those things: oversight is strengthened; case management should be more active; information sharing should be more robust; referral for clinical service should be prioritized and case management intervention to develop plans should be urgent.

After noting that science and research has shown that properly managed segregation units do not cause short- or long-term harm, Mr. Brown noted, "To respond to current circumstances with sweeping legislative reform is only to react ideologically, and to ignore science and evidence."

● (1230)

On the minister's grand solution to segregation, which is to rename segregation units to "structured intervention units", Mr. Brown noted that Bill C-83 described SIUs in such broad and vague language that the consequences of implementation were very uncertain, that the details were unknown and the details were the key. The current layout of many segregation units did not facilitate socialization and programming. The emphasis on programming suggested longer-term stays in SIUs, weeks or maybe months. SIUs would not be suitable for short-term management of volatile inmates, such as those under the influence. There was the inability to have specialized staff for particular subpopulations in a prison. Finally, he noted that given the current layout of many prisons, a wing may need to be deemed a structured intervention unit, meaning up to 96 inmates may be subject to 20 hours a day of confinement where before it would be only 16.

To be clear, someone who is an expert and has worked for years in prisons with segregation says that he cannot discern the minister's plan. Moreover, he says that prisons often lack the infrastructure, are inappropriate to what is needed and could have the opposite effect to what the minister claims.

Perhaps the only potential value in the legislation could come from an external review mechanism of segregation, because it could provide Canadians with greater confidence in offender management. The minister, however, told the committee that we did not have the authority to do this, an order the Liberal MPs on the committee followed, while the opposition members put forward mechanisms to provide such oversight, which were soundly rejected.

When we pushed the Liberals at committee to amend the worst parts of the legislation and pointed to the glaring issues raised by the

many expert witnesses, we were told that Liberal MPs were voting with "faith in the minister".

The role of committees is not to provide support and faith to a minister. It is to conduct detailed examinations on challenging issues, to hear from experts and impacted Canadians, to examine programs, spending and legislation to determine if it will meet the needs of Canadians or, at the very least, what the minister claims it will meet. On this, our committee has failed.

At the conclusion of committee debate on Bill C-83, my Conservative colleagues and I put our views on the record. We indicated that the committee failed in its role to review the legislation and ensure that it could make informed decisions. We also said that we believed the minister withheld information from committee that was clearly available to him at the time, namely the cost and how it would be used and implemented in the bill, which most witnesses said was essential to knowing if the bill would be useful. For the minister, it seemed more important that he withhold his plan from the committee. Half a billion dollars connected to a bill, where and how the money will be used is essential to know if the bill will work. We still do not have a plan necessarily for that money.

What was the response to the overwhelming criticism and skepticism of the bill? Government MPs stated that they were "making a leap of faith" and putting their trust in the minister. What was accomplished by the committee in reviewing this legislation? In my opinion, next to nothing. The Liberal members rejected amendments on how the money would be used. They rejected a requirement to publish the standards of the new SIUs. They rejected limits to reclassifying prisons. They rejected having the minister provide us with how he would implement this new plan.

On this legislation, the Liberals have turned their backs on Canadians. We are to trust the minister who has an extensive track record of misleading Canadians on things like the disastrous India trip, Bill C-59 and Bill C-71, failure to provide funding for police to tackle gangs, and I could go on.

We as a House can do better. We must do better. We can all rise to a higher level. Personally, I feel this committee failed its constituents, its communities and its country. Bill C-83 is yet another example of the many failures of the Liberal government.

● (1235)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is one of those moments where I am going to agree with the member from across the way in that we can do better: We can do better with the level of debate in this place.

I am a member of this committee. I worked hard with the other members on the committee. We listened to the testimony. It is simply incorrect to say that we did not push for amendments and make amendments that improved the bill at committee.

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It is unfair, with the level of debate in this place, to ignore that and make it sound as if it was just a leap of faith. It was not. There were amendments, in fact, large amendments in respect to oversight. There were amendments with respect to the conversations about what was meaningful contact. There were amendments made and there was discussion among members about what we could make this a better bill. We did respond to concerns that were raised.

In fact, to leave it as a statement that there was nothing done but a leap of faith does a disservice to the hard work by the members of this committee. I stand by that work. This is a comment not a question. It is simply a fact that we need to correct the record as to the work that was done.

Mr. Glen Motz: She did not ask me a question, Mr. Speaker.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I will explain the way things work. Normally we allow questions or comments. A comment has been made and if the hon. member wishes to respond, he may. If not, we will go on to the next question. I will leave it to the hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner to decide if he wishes to respond.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, absolutely I will.

The nice thing about a democracy is that we can and we are allowed to disagree. I sit on the committee, just as my hon. friend across the way does, and quite frankly I was disappointed. The main issue we were trying to address was the rehabilitation of prisoners. That is the purpose of corrections. We want to place them safely back into the community.

Bill C-83 fails in that respect. Witnesses had many other amendments, all of which were ignored by the Liberal majority on the committee. Were amendments made? Yes, but they did not strengthen the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I just heard him say that the purpose of this process is to place criminals back into society as safely as possible following their time in prison.

He must be familiar with the two provincial rulings, one in British Columbia and the other in Ontario, I believe, that challenged the value of administrative segregation.

Would the member not agree that administrative segregation is often used in the case of people with mental health issues and that, in many cases, this only makes matters worse?

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, we need go back even further, before individuals enter the justice system. Many individuals with mental health issues end up in the justice system in the first place because our society fails to properly deal with them on the level that we should. They end up there because of the crimes they commit due to their mental health.

I mentioned the court decisions from B.C. and Ontario. If we study the rulings, we can see that they do not point back to segregation but rather to the mismanagement of correctional

facilities themselves and the operational mismanagement regarding how to deal with individuals with mental health issues.

Do we need a more robust system to properly deal with this? Yes. Unfortunately the experts we heard did not believe the bill would address the issues the member has brought up.

● (1240)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to speak in favour of Bill C-83.

The purpose of the bill is to move away from the system of administrative segregation in place at the moment toward new structured intervention units. We have heard before in the debate in the House that this responds to two recent decisions by courts in Ontario and British Columbia. I read those decisions again last night. I have read them a few times now. They are difficult decisions. They set out clear problems with our existing system.

The member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques raised a question earlier, saying that the bill did not respond to what was set out in the decisions. I do not believe that is correct. There are two reasons, some of which I will go into later as we discuss the matter. However, in addition, it is because the system that was being reviewed and some of the rules that were being put in place when the judges were making their decisions were based on the system we have now. The system we would be putting into place with Bill C-83 would have a very different set of rules. We need to take that into account, and I will work through some of it. I believe this change in legislation, the change to the system we would put in place, would increase charter compliance and would respond to the issues that were raised.

I will admit that I approached the bill with some concerns. When the bill first came before us, I had a lot of questions. I listened to the testimony. We heard from inmates, corrections officers and lawyers. A lot of people brought forward their concerns on the bill. It made me think long and hard about what was the right way for us to address these issues.

What was really clear to me, the most important part when I looked at what was needed to improve the bill, was oversight. In fact, oversight and decision making was one of the key issues raised by both court decisions as a matter of procedural fairness. It was not only in the transfer to a unit but also in the decision to keep a person in what was at the time an administrative segregation unit.

I want to highlight the fact that oversight is the glue that keeps it together. Ultimately we need to have a system that is safe and secure, conducive to inmate rehabilitation, to staff safety and to protection of the public. We are all working toward that. There is much more work to be done, but there is also much work under way.

Regardless of Bill C-83, some improvements are already in place. There has been more than a 50% decline in administrative segregation placements over the last four years. That is already a change in the way things are happening on the ground. The other part is the fact that the correctional service commissioner's mandate letter highlights the need to work in a collaborative relationship with the Office of the Correctional Investigator in order to address and resolve matters of mutual concern.

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I have the highest respect for the Office of the Correctional Investigator. When we read those annual reports, we get an insight into what happens in our correctional system. To have that need to work together collaboratively in the mandate letter to resolve issues that have been raised is a very important statement about how we move forward with Correctional Service Canada. I would also add that the budget for the Office of the Correctional Investigator has been increased. I welcome that as part of the essential oversight we need for the system.

When talking about the bill specifically, at committee I worked closely with my colleague, the member for Oakville North—Burlington, on how we could improve oversight in the bill. How could we, when looking at structured intervention units, improve oversight. I want to thank the member for Oakville North—Burlington for introducing an amendment, to which the government has given royal recommendation, to allow for properly funded external oversight. That piece is essential. It responds to many of the concerns that were raised, not only by the courts but by witnesses as well. It builds on amendments that were made at committee.

• (1245)

At committee, for example, there were additional oversight pieces. One part I worked on would ensure that when people were transferred into a structured intervention unit, they would get written reasons for it in very short order. That is important, because one cannot appeal a decision if one does not have the reasons for it. It sounds legalistic, but it is important to have written reasons so people can appeal a decision if they wish.

Another piece I worked on was this. If a health expert recommended that an inmate be moved out of a structured intervention unit, and the warden disagreed, an additional review would be built in at a more senior level within Correctional Service Canada so that the decision could be reviewed. It is the layers of oversight that are essential and is why I believe that the work at committee was very important in moving that forward.

I have talked about oversight. Another issue we needed to address when we looked at the court decisions was the essential piece on what is now administrative segregation, which was highly criticized, and what we are proposing as far as moving toward structured intervention units. This turns on two parts: time in the cell and time in the cell without meaningful contact with people. Currently, inmates have 22 hours in a cell, plus shower time. The court was clear that shower time is over and above the two hours and does not mean that inmates are in their cells for over 22 hours. It completely rejected that as a notion. Inmates have two hours out of their cells.

There is an international set of rules, the Mandela Rules. Rule 44 sets out that solitary confinement is 22 hours without meaningful contact with people. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association case, which is one of the cases that gave rise to this, spoke specifically to this issue. It said,

Canada can take itself outside of the literature dealing with solitary confinement... in administrative segregation both in terms of the time that an inmate spends in his or her cell and the nature of the human contact that they have while segregated.

When the court was reviewing it, it said that we needed to make changes to the system in those two ways. That is, in fact, what this bill would address. Clause 36 of the bill would require that inmates

spend a minimum of four hours a day outside their cells. In addition, though, an amendment was introduced at committee that said that it had to be at a reasonable time. Those four hours could not be in the middle of the night, when people want to be sleeping. Therefore, those four hours would have to be between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m., a reasonable time when inmates may want to be outside their cells. Of those four hours, inmates would have to have an opportunity to interact for a minimum of two hours through activities, including, but not limited to, programs, interventions and services that would encourage inmates to make progress toward the objectives of their correctional plans or that would support their reintegration into the mainstream inmate population and leisure time. These are meaningful ways people could have contact and interact.

When I was looking at the B.C. case in particular, one of the things that really hit home was the fact that a lot of the contact inmates are having is through a meal slot. When they are interacting with staff and individuals, a lot of it is happening just through their meal slots, and that is just unacceptable. Without eye contact, that is not meaningful contact. It is important to make sure that there is contact, not just people walking by without interacting.

These are important changes. The bill gives us a chance to think about an entirely new system, which it really would be. We would be moving from administrative segregation, which is 22 hours in a cell without meaningful contact, to 20 hours and a requirement for meaningful contact. We would be changing things in a way that would be meaningful and important and that would respond to these court decisions. I understand that people have raised some issues, but I believe that this is an important step forward, and I am pleased to speak in favour of it.

• (1250)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind our colleagues in the House, as well as Canadians who are listening today, that segregation is used for the worst of the worst criminals. It is an administrative tool to keep inmates safe. It is to protect them from other inmates, to protect them from themselves and to protect correctional officers.

Our hon. colleague went on about the doubling of time inmates will be allowed to be out of their cells, from two hours per day to four hours per day. The president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers has stated that they are concerned that they currently do not have enough resources to provide inmates in segregation with two hours outside their cells.

What resources will be in place to ensure the safety of correctional officers when the worst of the worst are allowed out of their cells for four hours per day, regardless of the time of day they are allowed out?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, I have a concern when we speak about individuals as the worst of the worst. We may have strong issues with what people done, but to refer to them as the worst of the worst is really not an appropriate way to speak about these individuals.

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As far as responding to the question of how we can make sure that staff in correctional facilities are protected, that is absolutely a concern, and it is a concern we must address. That is part of the way we looked at it. It was not ignored, and to say that it was is not correct.

Investments have been made. The fall economic statement included \$448 million for corrections over the next four years. Of that, \$300 million will go toward human resources and the infrastructure updates required to establish structured intervention units.

It is being taken into account, and it is being worked on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I understand her reaction to the comments made by my Conservative colleague from Cariboo—Prince George regarding the worst of the worst. I agree with her. These individuals must be treated like human beings. Earlier a Conservative member said that segregation problems are often related to mental health issues, and I understand those concerns.

Considering my colleague's expertise, however, I do not understand how she cannot see that the bill, in its current form, will cause the same problems that led to the rulings handed down by the two provincial courts.

Is that not the case?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Last night, I took a look at the decisions in question. When I prepare my remarks, I like to have a good idea of what was said and the complaints about the existing system.

I believe that we should not just consider the hours spent by inmates outside their cells. The bill states that inmates must have human contact. One of the concerns raised was that some inmates had a great deal of difficulty because they lack human contact. The B.C. ruling indicates that there were days when inmates spoke with no one and saw no one.

In my opinion, that is a major difference. It is not just about the hours spent out of the cell; we are also requiring that inmates have access to rehabilitation programs.

• (1255)

[*English*]

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-83, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another act. Let me state from the outset that I am opposed to this bill, not for what the bill purports to accomplish but for what I am afraid the bill would unintentionally accomplish.

This legislation proposes to eliminate administrative segregation in corrections facilities by replacing these facilities with new structured intervention units and to also allow the commissioner to reassign the security classification of each penitentiary or any area in a penitentiary.

It is a tenet of our free and democratic society that the worst punishment one can consign to people is to deprive them of their liberty. Indeed, our Charter of Rights and Freedoms is clear on that matter. Section 7 states,

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

It is that clause that allows a democratic society that holds the fundamental principles of life, liberty and security of the person in such high esteem to deprive another of them. If someone commits a crime in Canada, particularly a heinous crime, that person will be locked away to protect society from that person's acts.

There are Canadians, particularly those who have endured unimaginable pain at the hands of criminals, who believe that they should have no rights in jail. On a deeply personal basis, I understand that cry for vengeance, the need to make another suffer for the way that person made a loved one suffer. As a parliamentarian, I must, like my colleagues in this House, temper my personal feelings with the duty Canadians have sought fit to invest in me to ensure that all people are treated equitably under the laws of this great nation.

As such, inmates in Canada are afforded a number of protections through human rights legislation, various statutes and the supreme law in Canada, our Constitution. They too are protected from the most dangerous criminals inside our institutions.

Segregation, or isolation, whatever we want to call it, affords protection for inmates, and let us not forget, the correctional staff who work in these facilities. The law requires that a balance must be struck between the protection of inmates and staff and the protection of inmates in segregation.

Inmates who are determined to be at risk to themselves or others would now be placed in new structured intervention units, or SIUs. Inmates would be given at least four hours a day outside their cells and guaranteed at least two hours to interact with others.

The introduction of SIUs would pose a risk to prison guards and inmates and to the inmates for whom solitary confinement is used for their own safety. Bill C-83 would strip the ability to use segregation for discipline. This change would make prisons more dangerous for the guards, as they would have to deal with the most violent of inmates, those who continue to prey on others inside the institution.

The Union of Canadian Correctional Officers has said that it has not been properly consulted on Bill C-83. On October 21, the Vancouver Sun reported that the head of the national prison guards' union predicted a "bloodbath" behind bars as the federal government moves to end solitary confinement in Canadian prisons. The national president, Jason Godin, explained:

...by eliminating segregation and replacing it with structured intervention units, CSC will further struggle to achieve its mandate of exercising safe, secure and humane control over its inmate populations. We are concerned about policy revisions that appear to be reducing the ability to isolate an inmate, either for their safety or for that of staff...

I share this concern that no thought has been given to what measures we need to take to make sure that nobody gets hurt.

Ivan Zinger, the correctional investigator of Canada, stated:

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In effect, Bill C-83 proposes a softer version of segregation without any of the constitutional protections. The bill is uniformly short on specifics and places too much discretion and trust in correctional authorities to replace segregation with an unproven and not well-conceived correctional model.

Bill C-83 goes further than what was raised in either of the Superior Court decisions. With respect to SIUs, the bill would allow the commissioner to reassign the security classification of each penitentiary or any area within a penitentiary. These sub-designations have raised concerns about whether this would allow an entire penitentiary to become an SIU and what that would mean for security and staffing.

• (1300)

Furthermore, these sub-designations could lead to more cases of higher-security prisoners being in a lower-security space, based on technicalities.

We know just how soft the government is already on the most despicable elements of our society. Recently, Terri-Lynne McClintic, who was convicted of first degree murder in the 2009 kidnapping and brutal killing of eight-year-old Victoria Stafford, was transferred to a minimum-security facility in Saskatchewan, even though she is serving a life sentence with no chance of parole for 25 years. Now the government wants to institute an official policy to allow this to potentially happen on a regular basis. It will not be on our watch.

Conservatives are opposed to any legislation that opens the door to allowing high-risk offenders to be housed in low-security facilities. Dangerous child killers, pedophiles and murderers—the most heinous of people—deserve to be behind bars. ISIS terrorists deserve to be in prison, not offered poetry classes by the government.

This bill is just another example of Liberals putting the rights of dangerous criminals ahead of the rights of victims and their families, ahead of the safety and well-being of correctional officers who must work in these facilities and of course ahead of common sense. The legislation is too wide-ranging.

Debra Parkes, a professor at the UBC law school, stated:

The first point is that the proposal for structured intervention units actually expands rather than eliminates segregated conditions. These provisions give incredibly broad powers to the commissioner to designate whole prisons or areas of prisons as SIUs. Purposes for placing in SIUs are also very broad, including from proposed paragraph 32(a), to “provide an appropriate living environment for an inmate who cannot be maintained in the mainstream inmate population for security or other reasons”, undefined and unclear. It's very broad.

While the supplementary estimates show \$448 million for CSC over the next six years, this piece of legislation has not been costed. Our correctional officers are doing an exemplary job at keeping everyone safe, including themselves and the inmates, but situations arise and people do get hurt. Now we are asking our correctional staff to do more with less. As situations continue to arise—and they will—more people will get hurt, and that is not acceptable.

Jason Godin, the president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, stated:

As recently as a couple of weeks ago, I was in Edmonton sitting in the segregation unit asking the staff in there if they were meeting the two-hour requirement, with the showers and the phone calls, and they said, “Absolutely not. It's 10 o'clock at night and we can't meet them.”

Currently, segregated inmates are supervised at a two-to-one guard-to-prisoner ratio when they are not in their unit. Bill C-83 purports to expand services to inmates in segregation and to double their time out of segregation without costing the resources needed to keep inmates and staff safe.

This is another reason I oppose the bill. It just does not add up, and the result could mean that people will be getting hurt.

The CSC ombudsman, the union of correctional officers, civil liberties and indigenous groups have all commented on the lack of consultation and they are concerned that too much of this legislation is being left to regulations. I am anxious that not enough consideration was given to the concerns of indigenous groups, to civil liberty organizations and to the correctional services staff who must maintain security in these institutions. The lack of consultation and foresight from the government on Bill C-83 is, to be frank, appalling.

Jason Godin offers this insight into the process, stating:

Unfortunately, due to cabinet confidentiality, as our commissioner often tells us, we weren't really consulted. The bill was as much a surprise to us as it was to anybody. I don't see the bill before it comes onto the table, so we weren't officially consulted on Bill C-83.

There was also this shocking revelation by Ivan Zinger:

All the consultations seem to have been done internally. To my knowledge, there have been no consultations with external stakeholders. I think that's why you end up with something that is perhaps not fully thought out.

It is of concern that the Liberals are moving away from segregation, particularly as a deterrent to bad behaviour, as it strips front-line officers of their tools to manage difficult prisoners. Solitary confinement must take into account the mental health of prisoners balanced with the safety and protection of guards, workers, and fellow inmates.

The safety of inmates and correctional service officers must be the priority for any legislation put forward by this government. It is clear, in our opinion, that the Liberals did not do their homework when it came to Bill C-83, and Canada's Conservatives call on this government to go back to drawing board with Bill C-83 and put forward legislation that prioritizes inmate safety and the safety of correctional service officers.

• (1305)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his well-thought-out speech. He brought up a lot of great points.

My colleague talked about a lack of resources in the government's plans. At the beginning of the estimates process, which seeks the authority to spend, the government is required to submit a departmental plan. The departmental plan has three parts. It includes an overview of the spending, it lists the resources required, and it also lists out the priorities and strategic outcomes. The plan for Correctional Services was tabled by the Minister of Public Safety and signed for by the Minister of Public Safety, and we heard the Liberals stand again and again to and say they have put aside the money and have put aside the resources.

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However, the departmental plan shows that over the next four years, the Liberals are cutting \$225 million from Correctional Services. This is what they have tabled in Parliament.

Further, for actual resources for manpower, they are not increasing it by one body over the next few years. The Liberals are planning to spend money on added resources for renovations at prisons and this and that, but at the same time they are cutting \$225 million. Does it sound a bit odd and contradictory to the member that the government says it is going to provide extra resources, but at the same time its own plan is showing a cut of \$225 million?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, yes, absolutely I agree with everything my friend said. The departmental plan is very clear, and even in the case of Bill C-83, which we are discussing today, this plan that the Liberals have has not even been costed.

We are already dealing with correctional officers who feel overworked and stressed as it is, and now they are being asked to do more with less. For those who are working hard, sometimes in dangerous conditions each and every day, and at times dealing with the worst of the worst within our society, asking them to continue while taking away a tool that they use to protect themselves and others is simply irresponsible.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it unfortunate that Conservative opposition members continue to try to give a false impression in terms of financial resources.

I am sure that the member across the way has been informed, at least through debates and no doubt in other ways, that millions of dollars, well over \$100 million, are being incorporated to assist in the many changes that are going to be required. Could the member at the very least acknowledge that there is a significant budget allotment to ensure that we are able to support the legislation and our correctional officers and so forth?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite looks at page 32 of the departmental plan that was signed off by the minister on that side, he will see that \$152 million was cut out of that budget this year compared to last year. The numbers speak for themselves, and it is in the report on page 32. I invite the hon. member opposite to read that page.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I also would like to inform my colleague from Winnipeg North that if he looks at page 30 of the departmental plan issued and signed off by his own minister, he will see the details of the \$225 million cut.

The government again talks about the safety and security of the workers in the Correctional Service of Canada. In this departmental plan, the government lays out 20 priorities for the coming year, yet not a single priority makes any mention of safety and security for the workers. Does this not clearly show that the Liberals are intent on helping criminals and not the victims of crime or the people who have to guard them in our prisons?

• (1310)

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with what my friend beside me has said. I would also point out that during my speech, I listed quote after quote from people involved in the correctional services who were saying that they are not consulted,

that they are being asked to do more with less and that they do not have the proper resources as it is.

This new legislation, Bill C-83, if it passes, will actually hamper them in doing their job and could put more officers at risk, so the Liberals are not protecting those they claim they are protecting.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me contrast the member's statements to reality. The reality of this legislation is far from what the Conservatives are trying to tell Canadians and others who are trying to follow this debate.

Let us be very clear in terms of what this legislation will do. It will make our communities safer. It will ensure that there are fewer victims. It will also ensure that there is accountability for those individuals who are breaking our laws.

In this contrast between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, there is a significant difference in approach in dealing with the crime and safety file.

The Conservative Party likes to sound as if it takes a really tough position on crime and safety, and that has not necessarily proven to be the case. Conservatives have the spin, and they are very good at the spin. I give them full credit for that. However, it takes away from their ability to be able to deal with the issue when they take the position of voting against this particular bill. By doing that, the Conservatives are in fact voting against what I believe is in the best interests of the communities we serve. We all want to have safer communities, fewer victims, and accountability.

Let me give the House a specific example of what I am talking about in the rhetoric that comes from the Conservative Party. The speaker before me made reference to Terri-Lynne McClintic. We are all very familiar with that particular file. This is the individual who was involved in horrific criminal activities and the murder of a child, among many other things.

Members will recall that the Conservative members jumped over their seats, hollering and screaming about how the government dared to allow this particular individual to go into a medium-security facility, a place with no fence, a healing lodge. I can recall, as I am sure people who follow the debates of the House will recall, the type of verbiage coming out of the Conservative Party. It was all hype, and I do not say that lightly. Very horrific things events happened, and we saw members of the Conservative Party actually stand in their place and remind Canadians of just how horrific those actions were.

The government said it would look into the matter and that it would report back to the House. The government, through the leadership of the minister, in fact rectified the problem.

However, what I found interesting was that the very same sort of criminal activity that was causing the Conservatives to jump out of their seats and be critical of the government for not acting on had occurred on numerous occasions under Stephen Harper. Why did the Conservatives not care about those individuals, the criminals who were child molesters and killers? Instead, under Stephen Harper, those criminals were transferred, and some went to healing lodges.

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We are not talking about one or two or three people; we are talking about a number of those individuals. The Conservatives had no problem being quiet on the issue back then. They did not raise it once while they were in government. However, they have a different approach in opposition.

I will give them credit. They are a pretty decent opposition party. They are pretty good at it. They know how to really ramp things up.

• (1315)

As I pointed out yesterday, I was in opposition for far too many years. I hope to see the Conservative opposition continue to be in opposition for many, many more years, maybe as many years as I was in opposition if we combine the provincial and federal levels.

I suggest that the bill will have a positive impact on all of our communities. The Conservatives believe that once a criminal goes into jail, that person is a real, superb person in all cases and is going to be in jail for a long time. They do not believe in the importance of rehabilitation. They do not recognize that.

The reality is that a majority of the individuals who are going in are in fact going to be going out. If we can provide better rehabilitation programs within the prison system for that majority, there will be a greater likelihood that crimes will be prevented when offenders exit our prisons.

That is consistently overlooked by the Conservative Party, and that is unfortunate. This legislation is going to include the provision of additional health and other services, which will ultimately allow many prisoners to be assimilated into our communities in a better way. That is important to me and the constituents I represent, because we know that a majority of offenders are going to be leaving prison.

There are other aspects of the legislation, such as the body scanner. Maybe the Conservatives have singled that aspect out as a positive thing. I would like to think they have. It would ensure that there are fewer drugs entering, and that searches are less invasive when people visit or enter the prison. We have provincial facilities that already have it. This will allow it to occur in our national facilities.

There is another aspect that I would like to draw attention to, and that is the audio. Under the current law, if a person who committed a sexual assault is going before a board hearing, often the victims will attend because they want to listen in on that board hearing. If victims choose to do that, then they are not eligible to receive the audio recording of what took place.

Under this legislation, victims will be able to receive the audio whether they attend or not. I am sure people can imagine the situation for a victim of being in that room. They can imagine what might be going through the victim's mind, and they can understand that the victim is not necessarily at a stage where he or she can fully digest everything that is being said. That is one of the reasons, if not the primary reason, why victims would want to see this aspect of our law changed. This legislation incorporates that.

I spoke to the legislation at second reading and encouraged individuals to get involved by looking at the legislation. The minister indicated that he is open to improving the legislation. At the

committee stage we saw many amendments brought forward, and they were not only government amendments. We had opposition party amendments, and even the leader of the Green Party brought in amendments. Not only were a number of those amendments brought in by opposition members, but they were also accepted.

• (1320)

The legislation we have today is even better than it was prior to going to committee, which speaks volumes as to how effective a standing committee can be if we take some of the partisanship out and people focus on improving legislation.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when my friend across the way said that we have no interest in rehabilitation, that was even more ridiculous than the things he usually says.

Our caucus has a very strong interest in effective rehabilitation. We understand that part of the process of rehabilitation is personal responsibility. A perpetrator must come to understand what has been done, what is wrong about it, and how to respond and make restitution with the victim. That is part of the process of rehabilitation. Philosophies on criminal justice that deny personal responsibility and want to blame social factors for everything really do not move us effectively toward rehabilitation.

While we are on the subject of criminal justice, I want to ask my friend a question about these special remediation agreements that individuals might want to enter into. Suppose there is an individual who is the parent of six or seven dependent children, and he or she commits a crime. I wonder if that individual should be able to access a remediation agreement. I am curious to hear the member's views on whether individual criminals should have access to remediation agreements if they have many dependents who might be affected by their situation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, one would expect that individuals who enter into our prison facilities recognize that what they have done is wrong and is the reason they are going into the facility in the first place. Governments, whether it is this one or previous governments, have consistently acknowledged that there has to be accountability or consequences to any form of criminal behaviour. I used to sit as the chair of a youth justice committee, and that was an absolute given.

Therefore, when the member reflected on what I said, it was one of the silliest comments I have heard from him in the last three to three and a half years, and he has made quite a few. Of course there has to be accountability and consequences for people who commit criminal actions or actions outside of what is acceptable. It is an absolute given that it will land them in a prison facility or is the reason they are in a facility.

The difference is the Conservatives never want to talk about rehabilitation and its benefits inside this chamber, because they would rather talk about how they are tough on crime. They would rather say that if people commit a crime they will go to jail, and if it was up to them the key would be thrown away. They want to make it sound as if they are tough on crime. However, their actions often lead to communities that are less safe, and to more victims.

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Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I had a number of amendments accepted in this process, and I found the clause-by-clause process of Bill C-83 to be quite collaborative.

I was briefly out of the chamber. Therefore, I have to apologize if this point has come up already.

Earlier today one of my hon. friends referred to people in segregation units or solitary confinement as the worst of the worst. I think of the coroner's report with respect to what happened to Ashley Smith. She was a young woman with mental health issues who was moved 17 times in the period before she was found in her cell. She had committed suicide, but the correctional guards were watching as she died. The coroner's report was very clear.

This bill attempts to deal with some of that. Edward Snowshoe is another example of somebody who died in solitary confinement. These are not the worst of the worst; rather, "There but for fortune may go you or I." Ashley Smith's mother was desperate to help her. However, the correctional authorities and the system kept a mother away from a girl who was suffering and ultimately killed herself. Therefore, let us not judge the people who get stuck in solitary confinement, but rather recognize it for what it is: a form of torture, which we must not use.

This bill does not go far enough. I will vote for it and hope it gets improved again in the Senate.

I wanted to ask my hon. colleague to talk about the fact that some of the people in solitary confinement are there because of mental health and addiction issues. Could he explain how it compounds the torture when they are kept away from people who can have good, healthy contact with them?

• (1325)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is a fair assessment. It would be most inappropriate to say that only the worst of the worst are in solitary confinement. People are put in solitary confinement for a wide range of reasons, which could be everything from a personal safety type of issue, to some of the worst of the worst, to issues dealing with mental health. The member is quite correct in her comments in many ways.

However, I would like to recognize that this proposed legislation would have a positive impact on our communities in terms of making them safer. I truly believe there will be fewer victims as a direct result of progressive legislation of this nature.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in the House and to participate in today's debate on Bill C-83.

This piece of legislation will transform our corrections system. Ultimately, we want to promote safety and security, both in and out of our federal institutions. The bill also prioritizes rehabilitation as a key factor in achieving this objective.

The key innovation in Bill C-83 is the proposal to create structured intervention units, or SIUs. These SIUs would be found in every prison. Some inmates are sometimes too dangerous or disruptive to be housed safely in the general prison population. Currently, these inmates are placed in administrative segregation.

Federal inmates placed in administrative segregation can spend up to 22 hours a day in their cells and have very limited interaction with other inmates.

Bill C-83 offers a more effective solution for everyone involved. Safety will always be the top priority. Prisons are safer for those who live and work there when inmates have access to programs, mental health care, and other interventions they need. Inmates who benefit from these interventions are more likely to reintegrate into society safely when they leave the institution.

The government's proposed solution in Bill C-83 is to eliminate administrative segregation and replace it with structured intervention units. These units will be safe and separate from the general population to ensure compliance with safety requirements. They will also be designed in such a way that inmates who are placed there will receive requisite interventions, programs and treatments. Inmates in structured intervention units will be allowed to leave their cells for at least four hours a day instead of the two hours allowed under the current system. It should be noted that the two-hour period is currently established by policy, not by law. Bill C-83 would enshrine the four-hour minimum in law.

Inmates who are placed in SIUs will have the opportunity to have at least two hours of meaningful interaction with other people, including corrections staff, other compatible inmates, visitors, chaplains and seniors. The objective of these reforms is to ensure that inmates in SIUs are able to reintegrate into the general prison population as soon as possible.

Bill C-83 has been thoroughly analyzed at every step of the parliamentary process thus far. Members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security went through it with a fine-tooth comb, and some useful amendments were made at the end of the committee review period based on the testimony of a broad range of stakeholders.

Bill C-83 was already a robust and effective piece of legislation when it was introduced, but after being vigorously debated and carefully examined, it is now even better. It is important to point out that the bill that was sent back to us includes amendments from all of the parties that proposed amendments.

I disagree with the suggestion made in debate that it is somehow a bad thing that the bill was amended in reaction to comments from the public and parliamentarians.

I am proud to support a government that welcomes constructive, thoughtful input and that respects the role members from all parties play in the legislative process.

• (1330)

The purpose of most of the amendments to Bill C-83 is to ensure that structured intervention units, SIUs, work as intended.

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For example, some witnesses were concerned that time outside of the cell might be made available in the middle of the night, when inmates are unlikely to benefit from it. The member for Montarville added the requirement that time outside the cell be provided between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. Other witnesses wondered whether mandatory interaction with others might be provided through a door or a meal slot.

To address that concern, the member for Toronto—Danforth added a provision stating that every reasonable effort shall be made to ensure that human contact takes place face to face and that a record of exceptions is kept.

In response to concerns about Correctional Service Canada making inappropriate use of the provision stating that time outside the cell can be denied in exceptional circumstances, the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore added a list of specific examples, including fires and natural disasters, to clarify the interpretation of that provision.

Amendments put forward by the member for Toronto—Danforth in committee and by the member for Oakville North—Burlington at report stage will strengthen the review process to ensure that placement in SIUs is subject to robust internal and external oversight.

All of these measures will help ensure that the new SIUs are used as intended.

We also accepted various amendments put forward by the members for Brampton North, Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, Beloeil—Chambly and Saanich—Gulf Islands. I thank them all for their contributions.

We all want our institutions and communities to be safer, and we want Canadians to feel and be safe. The successful rehabilitation and reintegration of people serving a federal sentence is essential for achieving our shared objective of enhancing public safety.

By enabling inmates who need to be separated from the general inmate population to spend more time outside their cells, have more access to mental health services, and receive more rehabilitation interventions, Bill C-83 is a big step in the right direction.

Again, I want to thank my hon. colleagues for their contributions at each step of the legislative process so far, and I urge them all to join me in enthusiastically supporting this bill.

● (1335)

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to bring this back. I feel it is important we do this at every opportunity. Each member from the government side has said there have been significant consultations and witnesses that appeared before the committee, and their concerns were heard. However, we know through comments from the president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers that there are still significant concerns. Witness after witness has said the bill is flawed right to the core.

Therefore, I want to go back to what we are dealing with again today. During the 2015 debate, the member for Papineau, now our Prime Minister, said he would let debate reign. He would not force

closure on debate. We have seen it well over 60 times. On a piece of legislation, such as Bill C-83, which is so important, all sides would agree to that, the Liberals have forced time allocation once again, limiting debate and essentially limiting the voices of the members of Parliament on this side. We are the voices of the electors who put us in the House to ensure the voices of our regions and ridings come to Ottawa. What the Liberals have done now, as they have done so often, is that they have silenced those voices of opposition.

Why, on such an important piece of legislation, do the Liberals feel the need to force closure and ignore the comments and concerns of the witnesses that came before the committee?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, far from parliamentarians, the stakeholders and the Canadian public being silenced, I am actually quite taken with the amount of consultation that went into this legislation, which is long overdue for a problem that was putting in jeopardy not only the people that were incarcerated but also those who work with them.

I have something of a background in community and social work service and I had many colleagues who worked in the prison system. I was very much taken with how they were able to work in such difficult conditions with so few tools. It is one thing to talk and it is another thing to take action. To come forward with a piece of legislation such as Bill C-83, which meets those demands while at the same time coming with \$448 million in investments, including in infrastructure and the kinds of tools that would keep people safer within and outside of the prison system, shows that our government is taking action where it counts and that people have been heard.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question is quite simple. I asked another Liberal member the same question, but I did not really get a response.

Bill C-83 was tabled in response to decisions handed down by superior courts in Ontario and British Columbia that deemed the current administrative segregation model unconstitutional. These decisions included a number of recommendations, but upon reviewing Bill C-83, it would seem that most of them were overlooked.

Why did the government not seize this opportunity to respond to the two court rulings that struck down the current administrative segregation model as unconstitutional?

● (1340)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I understand that my colleague is very concerned about the problem of administrative segregation.

After reading Bill C-83, I think that structured intervention units are a major step forward in resolving this problem. They will ensure that inmates have access to human contact and appropriate interventions that promote their rehabilitation.

[English]

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-83, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another act.

Government Orders

I understand that Bill C-83 is designed to make a number of significant changes to our correctional system. It seeks to eliminate administrative segregation in correctional facilities, replace these facilities with new structured intervention units, or SIUs, and introduce body scanners for inmates, among other changes.

There have been a lot of problems with the correctional system and Bill C-75 could make it worse. The policies under Bill C-75 include serious offenders receiving sentences of a maximum two years less a day. People who have committed serious crimes to persons and property will be in provincial jails, downloaded. We now will have a system where there will be less chance to deal with serious offenders in provincial institutions. It has become a revolving door, where some know they will be in and out very quickly and will not be provided the help they may need in a prison system.

I know the legislation has prompted some strong responses from stakeholders. I am happy to convey some of those serious concerns.

The CSC ombudsman, Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, civil liberties and indigenous groups have all commented on the lack of consultation. Unions and employees have not been consulted. Nor have indigenous groups.

The president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, whose members will be directly impacted by the legislation, even said, “The bill was as much a surprise to us as it was to anybody.” It does not sound right that it was a surprise to those who would be affected the most. It is something like the Parks Canada budget that had a \$60 million pathway in it and Parks Canada knew nothing about it.

The correctional investigator of Canada told the public safety committee:

All the consultations seem to have been done internally. To my knowledge, there have been no consultations with external stakeholders. I think that's why you end up with something that is perhaps not fully thought out.

For a government that supposedly loves to consult, it sure seems to have left a lot of people dissatisfied with this process.

Of particular note are concerns we have heard from correctional officers. These are the people who wear the uniforms. These are the people who protect us and inmates. The introduction of SIUs may pose a risk to both prison guards and inmates. The legislation goes further than what was raised in either Superior Court decisions. It completely bans administrative segregation and introduces the structured intervention unit model.

We need to take a lot of care in how we deal with youth offenders or those with mental illnesses or mental disease for which segregation may not be an option. We need to be very careful in how we use segregated models with those people.

This has the potential to make prisons much more dangerous for guards and inmates. Guards will lose an important disciplinary tool. In fact, the president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers told the public safety committee, “by eliminating segregation and replacing it with structured intervention units, CSC will further struggle to achieve its mandate of exercising safe, secure and humane control over its inmate populations.” That is a very troubling

statement. In other words, was the consultation there to find another solution? I do not think so.

Guards will be placed in greater danger as they attempt to control extremely dangerous offenders without the ability to fully separate them from other inmates. Who is going to want to be a guard if things continue this way? It is already an intensely stressful, challenging occupation. We cannot keep placing these people under greater strain. Dangerous inmates will be forced together in units with each other. Is that the right way to go?

I understand that this change is well intentioned. Canada has a fundamentally sound and humane correctional system, especially compared to many other jurisdictions around the world. We do not want a draconian system, but we do need to balance the mental health of prisoners with the safety and protection of guards, workers and fellow inmates.

• (1345)

The bill would fail to do some of those things. It ignores the reality on the ground in many prisons. As the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles noted, some inmates request to be in administrative segregation for their own safety. They do not want to rub shoulders with other dangerous offenders.

Legislation intended to improve our correctional system should not compromise safety and security. The government needs to go back and fix the bill. It should not force the bill through over the objections of virtually all interested stakeholders and put lives at risk in doing so, especially the lives of those who wear the uniform.

I am also surprised to find that the legislation does nothing to ensure that high-risk offenders are not transferred to low-security facilities.

It was just last year that Canadians from coast to coast expressed outrage over Terri-Lynne McClintic's transfer to a healing lodge. Only after massive public pressure did the government finally move to address the injustice and send her back behind bars. The Prime Minister personally attacked his critics and accused Canadians of politicizing this issue. Thankfully, Canadians were able to pressure him enough to act so that decision was changed.

However, a prime minister should never have to be shamed into doing the right thing. There was an opportunity in this legislation to take real action to prevent similar situations in the future, but no action was taken on this topic.

One clear positive aspect that would result from the legislation is the introduction of body scanners. If this system is applied properly, it should be helpful in intercepting drugs before they make their way into prisons. It is important that the scans apply to all individuals entering the prison. Drugs simply should not be flowing into correctional facilities and creating even more dangerous conditions there.

Government Orders

However, I am unclear why the Liberals' haphazard plan to supply inmates with syringes would still be implemented if we have scanners. Our objective should be to prevent drug abuse in prisons, not facilitate it. Furthermore, legitimate concerns have been raised over the weaponization of the syringes. It should be obvious that the worst offenders will try to use syringes as weapons. This presents yet another threat to guards who are already operating in a dangerous environment. The body scanners should receive the highest priority, and the needle exchange program should be scrapped.

In summary, this flawed legislation is not right. It does not prioritize the safety of correctional service officers. It compromises the safety of inmates. Almost all of the witnesses the public safety committee heard were critical of the bill. The consultation process was obviously not complete.

Instead of scrapping the legislation in light of witness testimony, the Liberals are pressing forward with it. I join my colleagues in opposing the bill.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech of my Conservative colleague. I am really struck by the sudden interest the Conservative Party has in those who would be affected by the legislation, namely the prison guards, and their work conditions.

Where was the former government when it came to the massive increase in double-bunking and the cries from the guards at the time to do something about that? It did absolutely nothing. It continued to promote and encourage double-bunking. Where was the previous Conservative government when it came to the union changes that heavily regulated how unions could operate?

The member spoke at length about the rhetorical comments that were made in the House. What about the hypocrisy that is being displayed in the Conservative Party's sudden interest in the union that represents the guards in our prisons?

• (1350)

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, one of the things I often speak about in my comments is history. I find that over his three years here, my colleague has spent a lot of time speaking of history and past governments. I am talking about this legislation. I am talking about the legislation from the current government, its flaws and how it could be better.

Rather than talking about history and the past, we are talking about the current government and what it is attempting to do. It did not get the bill right.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend for Bow River for doing a great job of illustrating some of the concerns he has with the legislation.

I would ask my friend and colleague what specific recommendations he might have made going forward that would have improved the bill but, unfortunately, were not listened to at report stage or were not listened to when making amendments.

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that really bothers me is the issue of syringes. We know there is drug abuse. However, when we travel, we are all familiar with scanners and we know how good they are in identifying objects. If I leave a dime in pocket, it will be found. We know how good scanners can be.

If we could reduce drug abuse in prisons, that would be the first step. The second step is to reject the exchange of syringes. We know they will be used as weapons on other inmates and guards, which is just wrong.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I take a little offence with our colleague across the way who likes to go on and on. He lives in the past. He does not take any blame for the legislation the Liberals have put forward.

Again, I would remind those in the House and in the gallery that it is over 60 times now that the government has forced closure on important legislation, which means it is silencing the voices of those who are elected in the official opposition, and that is shameful.

In my hon. colleague's opinion, in the three and a half years we have been here, why does the government continue to force time allocation on such important legislation?

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, whenever I am in the House listening to speeches, members have a variety of different viewpoints. It is these different viewpoints that we may not hear when we close debate all the time. There may be some commonality in speeches, but each individual brings differences in his or her speech, and that is important for us to hear.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood. He will have approximately five minutes and then we will go to question period. He will have his remaining five minutes when we return to this discussion.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for that generous five minutes.

I am pleased to join the debate on Bill C-83. I join this debate in two capacities: as an interested member of Parliament and as the chair of the public safety committee, which reviewed the bill, heard the witnesses and put forward quite a number of amendments to the original bill, which in some respects reflects the interest in the bill and how the government was open to amending the bill at committee.

The bill would replace the existing administrative segregation system with structured intervention units. The new SIUs would ensure a separation from the general prison population, which is sometimes necessary for security reasons. Even those witnesses who had actually been segregated prisoners emphasized the need for some mechanism by which a prisoner is separated from the general population. This, however, does not mean separation from rehabilitative programs, mental health care and other interventions.

If members think that this is just an academic exercise, I direct their attention to the front page of *The Globe and Mail* this morning. It read:

Ontario will not appeal a judge's decision to abandon a charge of first-degree murder against Adam Capay, the 26-year-old from Lac Seul First Nation who spent more than 1,600 days in solitary confinement before a public furor over his plight forced officials to send him to a secure hospital.

The very issue that we are debating today is on the front page of *The Globe and Mail*. The article continued:

Statements by Members

In deciding against an appeal, the province is consenting to a scathing ruling from Justice John Fregeau that set Mr. Capay free last month and faulted the ministry of corrections for allowing a term of solitary that was "prolonged, egregious and intolerable."

In particular, he found that the jail's procedure for reviewing Mr. Capay's segregation was "pro forma, perfunctory and meaningless"....

Further on, there is some disaggregation of the errors and omissions:

At the time, nothing was controversial about the initial decision to lock him in solitary confinement. Correctional officers have authority to segregate a prisoner if they believe he could harm himself or others. On average, 472 provincial inmates faced segregation every day in 2012.

But in the Capay case, the institution started racking up serious errors and omissions that led directly to his release without trial.

The Supreme Court long ago ruled that people keep some residual rights and liberties after the courts send them to prison. If those residual rights are further reduced by being placed in segregation, the state must hold regular review hearings of the decision.

In Ontario, the law requires segregation review hearings to be held at the institutional level....

The article goes on to discuss Mr. Capay's case, but also the larger issue and that is the larger issue that we are facing today.

As I said earlier, when we heard testimony from various witnesses, those who actually had been subject to segregation and those who were supporting those who had been subject to segregation all argued for the need for segregation. The bill fits with the broader approach to corrections, which is based on the fact that public safety is best served by effective rehabilitation and treatment.

Naturally, there are some inmates who will never be granted any form of conditional release by the Parole Board. They are mostly people serving life sentences who will never progress to the point where the risk they pose to the outside can be managed outside of a correctional institution.

• (1355)

I see that my all too generous five minutes are now up and I will be delighted to resume after question period.

• (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood will have five minutes coming to him once we resume debate.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

YOUTH FOR CLIMATE

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, young people in Montreal and around the world are calling on the government to get serious about the climate crisis, but the federal government does not seem to be getting the message.

The National Energy Board proved it by publishing its report on the Trans Mountain pipeline project, which will export the dirtiest oil in the world. The English-only report found that Trans Mountain will cause a spike in greenhouse gas emissions, threaten already endangered killer whales, and adversely affect the cultural practices

of indigenous peoples, who, by the way, were not adequately consulted on this. However, the NEB is saying yes to Trans Mountain, just like it has been saying yes to pipelines for the past 60 years. That is what a petro-state is all about.

On March 15, there will be a global youth climate strike. Students will be protesting in Montreal and elsewhere, and I invite the public to join them.

* * *

[*English*]

TEESHA SHARMA

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the House about Teesha Sharma from my riding of Pitt-Meadows—Maple Ridge, who passed away last week at the young age of 27.

From being abused at a young age and living on the streets as a teen to becoming an advocate for homeless youth, as well as finally being named Citizen of the Year in the under 40 category, Teesha was a force to be reckoned with.

Those of us who attended the Standing Committee on Human Resources' study on poverty reduction in Maple Ridge last year will remember Teesha and her unforgettable story of her life on the streets. Her words touched every MP there.

Teesha was a fighter and never gave up. She found a way to overcome the tragedy in her life. She took the pain from her past and turned it into a determination to help shine a light on the struggles many vulnerable youth face.

Teesha's presence will be deeply missed. She set out to make a difference and she did just that. May the lives she touched continue to carry on her work, and through them, her lasting legacy.

* * *

HOME OWNERSHIP

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Home Builders' Association is on the Hill today, meeting with members of Parliament. Made up of over 8,500 companies, homebuilding represents 1.2 million jobs and \$151 billion in economic activity. Together, they build what many consider to be the highest-quality housing in the world.

In Vancouver, Toronto and too many other communities, many Canadians are finding it hard to access ownership in housing and get a place they can call home. There is much to be done on affordability, and the home builders call on governments at all levels to help Canadians achieve home ownership by addressing excessive taxation, huge fees and onerous approval processes. Together, these can represent up to 40% of the price of a new home, which is passed on—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Long Range Mountains.

*Statements by Members***WINTER TOURISM**

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the evidence is quite clear. Mother Nature or Old Man Winter, whomever people believe in, has been in my riding of Long Range Mountains plenty this winter, and it has been wonderful for all the winter carnivals. There has been sliding, skiing, snowmobiling and snowshoeing, just to name a few of the snow sports, plus plenty of community events, great food and entertainment for all ages to participate in and enjoy.

[*Translation*]

I very much appreciate the new volunteers and sponsors who make these events such a success year after year.

[*English*]

Winter tourism is growing incredibly in my province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and these carnivals are a great attraction for tourists as well. This week, at the annual tourism conference of Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, tourism industry leaders are discussing the growth potential of the winter season with our federal Minister of Tourism, who will be attending.

[*Translation*]

I would have my colleagues know that there are plenty of people who enjoy the snow in the winter, and I am pleased to be one of them.

* * *

• (1405)

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, survivors of St. Anne's residential school joined abuse survivors from around the world in Rome to call on the Pope to take action, yet we learn the Government of Canada has dropped extradition efforts against Johannes Rivoire, a sexual predator who preyed on youth in Nunavut.

In doing so, Canada has failed justice and reconciliation. Rivoire is being protected by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Strasbourg, France. The decision of the Oblates to protect this criminal is a crime against the people of Nunavut, a crime against the church and a crime against the human community.

[*Translation*]

Today, I am calling on Canada's Catholic churches and Oblate congregations to condemn Rivoire. I am also calling on the Oblates in France to stop protecting this criminal. It is time that the Oblates and the Catholic Church took responsibility for this criminal abuse. We are seeking justice for survivors.

* * *

[*English*]

PRINCIPAL OF SCARBOROUGH CAMPUS

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Scarborough—Rouge Park, I am thrilled to welcome Professor Wisdom Tetey as the eleventh principal of the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus.

Born and raised in Ghana, Professor Tetey completed his Ph.D. at Queen's University and has held academic positions at Queen's, the University of Calgary and the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus. At the Okanagan Campus, he was the main instrumental figure in the development of a five-year strategic plan and the indigenization of UBC's curriculum.

Professor Tetey is an expert in African studies and has several publications on media, politics, civic engagement, the African diaspora and the brain drain from the continent. He was the lead investigator for the World Bank and has received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

I recently met Professor Tetey and was truly impressed by him and his commitment to research, academic freedom, equity, students and reconciliation. Principal Tetey becomes the first black principal at UTSC.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Bob Benzen (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, amid a mounting list of failures, the Prime Minister's 2019 carbon tax is just the beginning of what he wants Canadians to pay. The Prime Minister's carbon tax will add 11 cents to the cost of every litre of gasoline and hundreds more to heat a home.

Despite fake assurances that it will not add up to much, if anything, independent experts disagree with the Prime Minister on the cost of his carbon tax to Canadian families, with some estimates as high as almost \$100 per month more, just for doing family things like working, playing and living, and at a time when Canadians say they cannot afford it.

Worse, the Liberal tax will go even higher. The Prime Minister may shrug, as he has never had to worry about money, but another \$100 matters to families trying to make the household budget last to the end of the month.

Canadians should not have to pay for the Liberals' failure or just to get by. That is why Conservatives are fighting for better. In October, Canadians can choose Conservative leadership to get ahead.

* * *

ACTIVITIES IN BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a part of celebrating Black History Month, I was pleased to host the first African Day on Parliament Hill.

I would like to thank the volunteer team led John Adeyefa and Hector Addison of the African Canadian Association of Ottawa. I would also like to recognize students Jada Baptiste and Dana Amegatse of St. Mother Theresa High School in Nepean for organizing an event in their school.

Statements by Members

I would like to thank a few hard-working community leaders, including Sahada Alolo, co-chair of the Ottawa Police Community Equity Council; Dorris Ngaiza of Tanzanian Canadians; Hodan Egale of the Somali Canadian Youth Centre; Moses Pratt of the Global Community Alliance, Chuks Imahiagbe and Wale Adesanya from the Nigerian Canadian Association, Francis Yel of the South Sudan community, and Dr. Thomas Ngwa and Franklin Epape of the Cameroon Canadian community.

* * *

DIFFUSE INTRINSIC PONTINE GLIOMA

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in this House today with the privilege of telling my fellow members about a real life superhero from Sault Ste. Marie: Kayge Fowler.

On May 25 of last year, at five years of age, Kayge received a devastating diagnosis. Diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma, or DIPG, is a highly aggressive brain tumour found in the brainstem. When the doctor informed Kayge's parents of the diagnosis, she said to them, "You need to understand that 100% of children don't survive this kind of cancer, and there's nothing we can do. We'll do 30 rounds of radiation to buy you some time, but that's all we can do for you."

Superhero Kayge and his parents, family, friends and community decided that they would believe in miracles and work hard for hope. They have rallied to fight for Kayge's life and for all children who may in the future be facing a diagnosis of DIPG.

In fact, his grandparents, the Fowlers, are visiting Ottawa today. They created e-petition 2046 to establish May 25 every year as the national day for DIPG awareness. Please sign the petition.

* * *

●(1410)

CANADIAN ALPINE SKIER

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of Canada's best alpine skiers, Larisa Yurkiw. Born in my riding in the city of Owen Sound, Larisa is a world-class skier who represented Canada for over 10 years, including at the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games.

Larisa's accomplishments run deep. She made her World Cup debut in 2007 and has been on the podium three times. At the time of her official retirement in 2016, Larisa ranked third in the world. An accomplished athlete, business woman and academic, Larisa has done everything from fundraising her own budget and managing her ski staff to completing her MBA.

Over the next few days, Larisa is graciously volunteering her time with the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa during their annual charity ski day. I ask all members to join me in recognizing her outstanding athletic career.

Larisa has made all residents of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, and indeed all of Canada, very proud. Well done.

HOUSING

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue of housing affordability is a major concern for all Canadians.

I am pleased to inform the House that members of the Canadian Home Builders Association are on the Hill today meeting with parliamentarians to see just how we can work better together to help people across Canada realize their dream of home ownership.

The CHBA has more than 8,000 member firms across the country. It is an industry that represents 1.2 million jobs and generates over \$150 billion in economic activity.

Home ownership is a key hallmark of the middle class and those working hard to join it. I encourage all MPs to support measures that will help unlock the door to home ownership.

* * *

GLOBAL RECORDING ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Drake for today being named the Global Recording Artist of the Year by the international music industry. Drake also won the award in 2016, and now becomes the first artist to win it twice.

I am very proud that a Canadian artist is making history in the global music industry. To see Drake's talent and success recognized at the highest level reinforces that Canadian artists are worth supporting and protecting. This recognition also highlights the importance of our heritage committee's study on remuneration models for artists and creative industries.

We are committed to building a framework that allows Canadian artists to build long and sustainable careers so that they can continue to create art that resonates on the world stage.

My many thanks to Drake.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are tired of paying for the Prime Minister's mistakes.

His first three budgets buried Canadians in debt, and Liberal taxes keep going up—this at a time when Canadians, especially low-income Canadians, can least afford it. Now the Prime Minister insists that low-income Canadians do not benefit from tax cuts because they do not pay any taxes.

Statements by Members

Canadians below the government's low-income cut-off pay plenty of taxes: income taxes, GST, payroll taxes and EI. The Prime Minister has been increasing those taxes on all Canadians to pay for his failures. Payroll taxes are up, leaving less take-home pay for those who need it, and the Prime Minister's ever-increasing carbon tax makes every tank of gas and every degree on the home thermostat more expensive.

While he and many of his cabinet colleagues may be able to afford to set up companies and buy villas to avoid taxes, most Canadians do not have the same options.

Why keep paying for Liberal failure when Canadians can choose Conservative leadership to get ahead?

* * *

NOBEL LAUREATE IN PHYSICS

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today and welcome to Ottawa a very distinguished member of my Waterloo region community, Nobel laureate in physics Dr. Donna Strickland.

Last fall Professor Strickland, of the University of Waterloo, became the first Canadian woman and only the third woman in history to be awarded the Nobel Prize for physics.

Dr. Strickland was awarded the prize along with Dr. Gérard Mourou for her groundbreaking work as a Ph.D. student in developing chirped pulse amplification, a technique that allowed laser technology to surpass a fundamental barrier.

Dr. Strickland's work has paved the way toward the most intense laser pulses ever created. Most notably, it has corrected nearsightedness for millions of people through laser eye surgery.

She is an incredible role model for young people across the country, particularly young women who aspire to enter the STEM fields.

I ask all of my colleagues to join me in welcoming her here today.

* * *

• (1415)

HOUSING

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a housing crisis in first nations in our region and across the country, with long waiting lists, overcrowded homes and tens of thousands of homes that have critical mould issues. In Manitoba alone, 85% of first nations people report mould in their homes.

It does not end there. Many homes still lack access to clean water and to sewer service, such as Garden Hill First Nation, where many people do not have clean running water because their houses are not hooked up. They have been unable to get funding, because they are not on a boil water advisory list. That is because they do not even have the water to boil.

The housing crisis is making people sick. Wherever I go in our north, what I hear when it comes to housing and sewer and water is

that there are longer and longer waiting lists, and the problems are getting worse.

When I have raised this issue in the House, all we get is talking points, even from the Prime Minister.

Enough is enough. The government has been in power for three years, and many more before that. It is time to cut the talk and act. There is a budget coming up, and people cannot wait longer.

Let us act to end the housing crisis now.

* * *

YORK—SIMCOE BY-ELECTION

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday there were whiteout conditions across southern Ontario, but when the skies cleared, there was a brilliant blue glow over York—Simcoe.

Congratulations to the new MP, Scot Davidson. Scot, Suzanne, Graydon and the amazing team in York—Simcoe won the trust of their community.

Neither sleet nor snow nor wind could keep Ontario voters back from saying “no” to the Prime Minister, “no” to PMO pressure, “no” to insider deals, “no” to running deficits, “no” to carbon taxes and other taxes. They said “yes” to getting things back on track in York—Simcoe, and more Canadians will too.

The winter of Liberal discontent is coming to an end. The polls show that spring is on the horizon, where more Canadians can make the choice, as they did for Scot, and elect a strong, stable Conservative government.

* * *

2019 BY-ELECTIONS

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of fair play, I believe we can all unite today in congratulating the newly elected members of Parliament for Burnaby South, Outremont and York—Simcoe.

The commitment to serve Parliament and our constituents is one we all share, and I thank the three victorious candidates, as well as all the others who put their name on the ballot.

[*Translation*]

I thank the hundreds of volunteers who helped all the campaign teams reach thousands of voters. I thank them for all the doors they knocked on, the calls they made, the hands they shook and the smiles they shared. The campaign could not have succeeded without their dedication and conviction.

[*English*]

Once again, allow me to offer my heartfelt congratulations.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

JUSTICE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is continually trying to find new ways to justify the political interference in an ongoing court case by the Prime Minister and his key advisers. The law on this is actually very clear. If an organization, like SNC-Lavalin, is charged with bribery, then the law states, “the prosecutor must not consider the national economic interest”.

The former attorney general made her decision. She said no, so why did the Prime Minister not take no for an answer?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Conservatives has just confirmed that there are two ongoing court cases.

We on this side take seriously the responsibility of standing up for jobs and growing the economy. The justice official background on remediation agreements states that two of the main purposes for remediation agreements are, one, to hold the organization accountable for wrongdoing and, two, to reduce the harm that a criminal conviction of an organization could have for employees, pensioners, stakeholders and other third parties who did not take part in the offence. We will always protect Canadian jobs. That is what we do on this side.

• (1420)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that cannot be their motivation. We know that because when they wrote the law they specifically excluded the national economic interest. They wrote the law and then tried to get the former attorney general to break the law. She said no. Apparently people in the Prime Minister's Office would not take no for an answer.

Why would the Prime Minister not accept the decision of the independent prosecutor of Canada?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we on this side will always respect the work of committees. We on this side will always respect the independent judicial system. We on this side will always respect the independence of officers of Parliament. We on this side will always protect Canadian jobs and stand up for them. We know our plan is working, and that is why Canadians have created over 800,000 jobs since we took office.

What is the record of the Conservatives? They had the least amount of growth, the worst growth since the Great Depression. Now we know why. Because they will not stand up for Canadian jobs.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, she is saying things that just are not true. We know they tried to interfere with an independent legal officer. They tried to get the former attorney general to change her mind. She said no. She said no on multiple occasions. In her view, and the view of the independent Crown prosecutor, SNC-Lavalin, based on serious corruption and bribery charges, did not qualify for one of these deals

Oral Questions

the way the Liberals themselves wrote it. Now they are trying to hide behind crocodile tears that no one is believing.

Here is a very specific question for the House leader. Did anyone in the Liberal government communicate to SNC-Lavalin—

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the record. The director of the Public Prosecution Service confirmed that prosecutors in every case “exercise their discretion independently and free from any political or partisan consideration.”

We on this side have increased resources to committees so that committees can do their work. Members from both sides sit on the justice committee. Justice committee members have come together to ask for witnesses to appear. Witnesses are appearing.

I will remind the House and all Canadians what Canadians said no to. Canadians said no to the failed approach of austerity by the Conservatives, which their leader continues to fight for.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to know the truth about the SNC-Lavalin case.

However, yesterday, the Prime Minister and the Liberal members refused the request for the Prime Minister to testify before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Will he answer a simple question? Did anyone in the PMO or any of the ministers close to him assure SNC-Lavalin that there would not be a criminal trial, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they will continue to speculate, but we, on this side of the House, are interested in the facts.

The leader of the Conservative Party met with the company, as did the leader of the NDP. The Conservative deputy leader said in committee that she did not want to give the impression or go on the record as saying that there was anything wrong with meeting with SNC-Lavalin.

We, on this side of the House, respect the work of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. We respect the work of all committees. That is exactly why we increased resources to committees. We will not take the Conservative approach.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked a very simple and perfectly legitimate question. Did a cabinet minister, the Prime Minister's Office or anyone from the Prime Minister's inner circle tell SNC-Lavalin that it could avoid a criminal trial for the matter we are now all aware of, which was brought to light over three weeks ago?

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to explain his actions to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have no respect for committees. Those of us on this side of the House know that members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights have called witnesses to appear. The witnesses are appearing and answering questions from members on both sides.

We know this matter is currently before the Commissioner of Ethics and the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. We on this side of the House respect the work of the commissioner and the committee. Clearly the Conservatives do not.

• (1425)

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2006, SNC-Lavalin illegally donated nearly \$110,000 to the Liberal Party of Canada and its associations. Today, SNC-Lavalin needs help because it is in big trouble.

The machinery was then set in motion. The company had more than 50 meetings with the government. Why?

Over those two years, the company had 14 meetings with the Prime Minister's Office, or one meeting every two months. Why?

The fact that the former justice minister will appear before the committee is something, and I look forward to hearing what she has to say. However, I would like to know why there were so many meetings with lobbyists.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the leader of the NDP met with SNC-Lavalin representatives. The leader of the Conservatives met with them also. The leaders of both parties met with them. Everyone knows this, and the leaders are not hiding it.

We know that the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights are doing their job. We, on this side of the House, firmly believe that they will do their job and ask questions, and that the witnesses will be able to respond.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a world of difference between one meeting and 50 meetings.

Here is what we know. The director of public prosecutions formally rejected a remediation agreement with SNC-Lavalin on September 4. Two weeks later, on September 17, the Prime Minister met with the former justice minister to discuss the matter. The day after that meeting, SNC-Lavalin lobbyists managed to get four meetings with senior officials and ministers.

Would the Minister of Finance or the Minister of International Trade Diversification, who each took one of those meetings, be willing to appear before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to explain what those conversations were about?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly, the NDP and Conservative members are sharing talking points, but let us look at the facts.

The director of the Public Prosecution Service has confirmed that, in each and every case, prosecutors exercise their discretion independently.

The deputy minister of justice confirmed that there was no direct communication in any specific case between the Prime Minister's Office and the DPP. The Clerk of the Privy Council also confirmed that at every opportunity, the Prime Minister made it clear that this was a decision for the Minister of Justice to take.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's letter from the former justice minister shows the extraordinary steps she has had to take to force the Prime Minister's hand to lift the legal gag order so she can speak truth to a parliamentary committee.

However, she is not the only person we need to hear from in the SNC-Lavalin scandal. We notice that there were numerous attempts by the Prime Minister's staff to pressure her into intervening in an independent legal investigation after it was found out that SNC was not eligible and they used a manifestly illegal argument, which was the economic interest.

In the interests of fairness, will the Prime Minister agree that Katie Telford and Gerry Butts and the rest of his staff will also testify in this hearing?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is one of the many members who was denying that members of the justice committee could do their work and would be able to meet. Today, that committee is meeting. The member and his party as well as the Conservatives said the justice committee would not be calling forward witnesses. Witnesses are appearing. They are answering questions.

The member and his party as well as the Conservatives said the former attorney general would not be invited to speak. Members of the justice committee invited her to speak. She will be speaking. They need to stop undermining the work of committees and start respecting our institutions so that Canadians know that they can as well.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, she is not going to get her honorary set of gold SNC cufflinks with excuses like that, because we are talking about illegal interventions by the Prime Minister's Office.

The Prime Minister and the clerk met with the former justice minister on September 17. She said no. The PMO official met her on December 5. She said no. The PMO staff met with her staff on December 18. They said no. Then the Clerk of the Privy Council met with her on December 19. She said no and was removed from her position soon after.

In the interest of corruption, I ask the Prime Minister this. When does no mean no for the Liberal Party?

Oral Questions

•(1430)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again let us look at the record. The director of the Public Prosecution Service confirmed that prosecutors in every case exercise their discretion independently and free from any political or partisan considerations. The Clerk of the Privy Council also confirmed that, at every opportunity verbally and in writing in December, the Prime Minister made it clear that this was a decision for the former minister of justice to take.

We on this side have lowered taxes on middle-class Canadians so that we could increase them on the wealthiest 1%. The NDP said no to that measure.

We on this side brought in the Canada child benefit. Today, Stats Canada confirmed that 278,000 kids have been lifted out of poverty and over 800,000 Canadians. The NDP—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Milton.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I feel like the hon. House leader is being paid by the word today.

I would say this. I have very few words on this matter. What I would like to know is this.

I am sorry. I cannot—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I would ask members to come to order. I would encourage members to try to avoid things that provoke disorder in the House, and comments that are insulting do that.

The hon. member for Milton.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: I cannot blame her, Mr. Speaker. I would not want to answer my questions either.

I have one question, which is very simple. I would like to know if between September 4 and October 10 the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister's Office, any cabinet minister, any lobbyist or anyone associated with the Prime Minister's Office indicated to SNC-Lavalin or gave assurances that it would be able to get a deferred public—

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the justice official backgrounder on remediation agreements states two of the main purposes for remediation agreements: one, to hold the organization accountable for wrongdoing; and, two, to reduce the harm a criminal conviction of an organization could have for employees, pensioners, shareholders and other third parties who did not take part in the offence.

The record shows that the leader of the Conservative Party met with the company. We know that the leader of the NDP met with the company. We know the deputy leader herself said on the record that she disagreed that there is anything wrong with meeting the company.

We on this side will focus on Canadians.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, somebody is going to have to answer this question, because on September 4, the director of public prosecutions actually informed SNC-Lavalin that it would

not be receiving a deferred public prosecution agreement. However, the audited financial statements of SNC-Lavalin indicate that the company was advised by the director of PPSC in October 2018 that it would not be invited by the PPSC.

Who in the Prime Minister's Office gave the assurance between September 4 and October 10 that there would not be a problem with the PPSC?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Again, Mr. Speaker, let us look at the record. The director of the Public Prosecution Service confirmed that prosecutors in every case, “exercise their discretion independently and free from any political or partisan consideration.”

Last week, the deputy minister of justice confirmed that “there is no direct communication, in any specific case, between the PMO and the DPP.”

The Clerk of the Privy Council also confirmed, “At every opportunity verbally and in writing in December, the Prime Minister made it clear that this was the decision for the Minister of Justice to take.”

We on this side will not undermine the work of committees or the commissioner, like the Conservatives—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Milton.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to break it down super simple.

On September 4, the director of public prosecutions told SNC-Lavalin that there would be no agreement coming its way. They did not report it, and they did not think it was real until October, but miraculously, there were copious meetings between SNC-Lavalin lobbyists and the Prime Minister's Office and the Clerk of the Privy Council.

So let us try this again. Who told them that they were going to be able to get out of going to court?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, it is not surprising that the Conservatives will undermine the work of committees. Once again, it is not surprising that the Conservatives will undermine the work of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. They did it for 10 years under Stephen Harper. Today they have chosen a new leader, but it still remains the same party as Stephen Harper's.

Canadians can have confidence in their institutions. We on this side will let them do their work. They are meeting. They are calling forward witnesses. Witnesses are appearing and answering those tough questions. Members from both sides are present.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

●(1435)

The Speaker: Order. There is too much noise. I am having trouble hearing the answers. We need to hear both the questions and the answers. Members have to remember that their side will get their turn in due course. Members have to listen to each other, whether they like what they are saying or not, as my hon. friend for Cariboo—Prince George is aware.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims that if he had allowed SNC-Lavalin to face criminal conviction, the company would go out of business, because corporate criminals are banned from federal contracts. But wait; in December 2015, the government gave SNC a deal exempting it from the ban, despite criminal charges. Now the government is changing the policy to exempt SNC even if it is convicted.

If the Prime Minister plans to allow SNC to get contracts, even after a conviction, why did he need to intervene to stop the company from going to trial in the first place?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government works to ensure the highest ethical standards for government procurement and effectively addressing wrongdoing. We have developed and are implementing a stronger integrity regime that holds companies accountable. PSPC has entered into an administrative agreement with this company while criminal proceedings are under way. This agreement permits the company to contract with the government while meeting strict corporate compliance conditions, ensuring strong oversight while protecting innocent third parties, like pensioners and employees, from financial harm.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is that not an interesting admission? They now claim that they can sign a direct deal between the public works department and the company to protect pensioners and jobs. That was supposedly the justification for interrupting the criminal proceedings in the first place, so if they have the ability to do this without blocking the prosecution, there must be another motive for having tried to secure a deferred public prosecution agreement.

Will the minister admit that they were just trying to protect their corporate cronies and not the jobs of the workers?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the practice of the government to put in place administrative agreements with companies while criminal proceedings are under way. This administrative agreement will terminate if there is a criminal conviction. In the meantime, we cannot comment on any ongoing court cases.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is working now on changing the policy so that the company could get an administrative agreement even after conviction. In other words, it did not need to go about blocking the prosecution to achieve that goal.

If it was not to protect the workers or the pensioners or any other innocent party, who does it leave that the government was actually protecting? Is it not clear that this company, which gave over

\$100,000 in illegal donations to the Liberal Party, is the real organization these Liberals are trying to protect?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was the Conservative government that put in place the integrity regime, and our government is working to in fact enhance it. We are increasing the scope of activities that could result in debarment from contracts with the government with our enhanced integrity regime. We are looking at putting in place a stronger integrity regime that definitely will benefit Canadians and make sure that Canadians' money is spent with integrity.

* * *

[Translation]

PHARMACARE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people across the country are struggling to afford their medications and struggling to make ends meet. Instead of helping these people, the Liberal government continues to tell them that they must wait.

Unions are in Ottawa this week to urge the government to work on creating a universal pharmacare program that is fully funded for everyone. People clearly need a single-payer universal pharmacare system that provides equal coverage to everyone.

When will this government take action?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the New Democratic Party, we on this side of the House do our homework.

We want to make sure that we develop a pharmacare plan that will meet the needs of all Canadians. We created the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare to do just that.

I look forward to seeing the council's recommendations. We will receive its report later this year.

●(1440)

[English]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, too many people skip the medicine they need because the prices are too high. All Canadians deserve coverage, but instead, the Liberals are cooking up a half-baked plan that leaves workers out. Do the Liberals not know that employer coverage is not what it used to be? Corporations have been rolling back benefits for working people, leaving them with not only less coverage but often with no coverage for the drugs they need.

Canadians want a comprehensive, universal, single-payer pharmacare plan that covers everyone equally. Why are the Liberals refusing to listen?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with something as important as a national pharmacare program, this side of the House wants to get it done right, and that is why we are doing our homework. I am very pleased that we have put together an advisory council on the implementation of a national pharmacare program. We have six Canadian experts who are looking at this matter and having conversations with Canadians. I look forward to receiving the report later this spring to meet the needs of all Canadians.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the justice committee, retired judge Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond testified that public officials must be able to point to lawful authority for their actions. What lawful authority did the Prime Minister have to conspire to stop the criminal trial of a company charged with bribery? What lawful authority?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, we have the rule of law. In Canada, we have a system that works. Canadians can have confidence in that system.

Members from both sides of the aisle sit on the justice committee. The member who asked the question is actually a member of the justice committee. He knows very well that when witnesses appear who have been asked to appear, witnesses are answering questions. We on this side have confidence in the work of the justice committee. It is really too bad that the member and his party do not.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, instead of respecting the former attorney general and the independence of her office, the Prime Minister launched a concerted campaign to change her mind, a concerted campaign to interfere with the independence of the office of the Attorney General. What lawful authority did he have to do that?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member continues to speculate rather than look at the facts. Let us look at the record so that Canadians can be reassured that they can have confidence in their institutions. The director of the Public Prosecution Service confirmed that prosecutors in every case exercise their discretion independently and free from any political or partisan consideration. Last week, the deputy minister of justice confirmed that there was no direct communication in any specific case between the PMO and the DPP. The Clerk of the Privy Council also confirmed that at every opportunity, verbally and in writing, the Prime Minister said it was a decision—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons often talks about what is happening at the justice committee.

In fact, yesterday afternoon, retired judge Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond testified that all public officials must be able to point to lawful authority for their actions.

In light of this, could the Prime Minister, who refuses to appear in committee, tell us whether he attempted to stop the criminal trial of a company charged with corruption, without regard for lawful authority?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, the government, under the Prime Minister's leadership, increased resources to committees to help them do their work.

We know that the MPs who sit on the Standing Committee on Justice, who come from both sides of the aisle, are doing their work. They are asking witnesses to appear, and the witnesses are appearing and answering questions.

The striking thing is that this member claims to have no intention of hurting the employees of SNC-Lavalin. He says so himself. However, the member for Carleton says something quite different in English. He said—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that line is getting old.

One thing is for sure: The committee is ready, but the Prime Minister has refused to testify. We also know the Prime Minister and his team pressured the former attorney general to halt criminal proceedings against SNC-Lavalin.

They did not see eye to eye on that, so what did the Prime Minister do? He gave her the boot.

Now Canadians know that their self-styled feminist, transparent government is nothing but a joke.

Once again, by what lawful authority did the Prime Minister attempt to halt criminal proceedings against SNC-Lavalin?

● (1445)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House have confidence in our institutions and in the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. The clerk confirmed that, at every opportunity, the Prime Minister clearly stated that this was a decision for the justice minister to take.

Interestingly, the member opposite himself said he did not intend to harm SNC-Lavalin employees, but in English, the member for Carleton said he wanted to shut down the company and was not afraid to say so. They need to be clear with the—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after eight years in this place, I thought that nothing could surprise me, but the Liberals can.

Oral Questions

The National Energy Board said in its report that the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion does not respect indigenous rights, that it constitutes a danger to our environment and that it will affect an endangered species. However, the Liberals are going to move forward with the project anyway, on the pretext that it is in the national interest.

Are we to understand that the Liberals believe that protecting our environment and respecting first nations is not in the national interest?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians elected our government because of our plan to grow the economy and protect the environment. That is exactly what we are doing with a \$1.5-billion investment in our oceans protection plan. We are also following the recommendations made by the Federal Court of Appeal concerning the progress of TMX.

If it were up to the NDP, there would be no new investments in the natural resources sector. Fortunately, it is up to Canadians, who elected a government to grow the economy and protect the environment.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for this genius pipeline-owning Prime Minister, the one who handed over \$4.5 billion to a Texas oil company after its pipeline was thrown out of court. Now he is looking to spend another \$10 billion to \$15 billion of our money.

The National Energy Board admits that this pipeline will hammer the environment, hurt indigenous relations and further wreck our climate. Governing is about making choices, and the Liberals are actually weighing the choice between protecting an orca population, repairing indigenous relations and actually fixing our carbon emissions, or building their pipeline. Which one is it going to be?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the court provided us with a clear path to move this project forward in the right way, and that is what we are delivering.

The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, a supporter of the LNG Canada project that will go through his riding and create 10,000 good jobs, seems to pick and choose the pipelines he supports. The members of the NDP caucus seem to think they can pick and choose which court rulings they listen to.

We know how important this process is to Canadians. We are working each day to get it right.

* * *

TRANSPORT

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, constant snow and ice buildup on runways can sometimes present a challenge for pilots in landing safely at regional airports. As you know, Mr. Speaker, in the Kenora riding, there are 22 airports of this kind. My constituents rely on Red Lake Municipal Airport to support our local economy and to maintain social well-being within our community. Can the minister please inform my constituents about what is being done to help local airports address their safety concerns?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kenora for his tireless work on behalf of his constituents. He knows that for this government, safety is our top priority. That is why I was delighted to join him at the airport in the community of Red Lake to highlight the new de-icing equipment and the new, improved runway lighting that is going to make the airport even safer. It is important for local residents, for tourists and for the local businesses that we will always put safety in front of everything at our regional airports.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the year, when the Prime Minister fired the former attorney general of Canada, she wrote a letter that spoke volumes. She wrote that it was vital to maintain a separation between the criminal justice system and politics. However, that is the exact problem at the heart of the Liberal scandal that has been rattling our country for the past three weeks.

We know that, on September 4, the director of public prosecutions said that she would be moving forward with the case against SNC-Lavalin.

I have a perfectly simple question. Did cabinet discuss this matter, yes or no?

• (1450)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the director of public prosecutions has confirmed that prosecutors in every case exercise their discretion independently.

On this side of the House, the government has done its job properly and has followed all the rules and laws. We stand up for the principles of judicial independence and the rule of law.

We know that this case was extensively discussed by the Premier of Quebec and many other individuals, including MPs. The case is currently before the Ethics Commissioner and the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, following the decision of the director of public prosecutions, there were three separate attempts to pressure the former attorney general. That pressure did not come from mere lackeys.

First it was the Prime Minister, then his principal secretary, and finally Canada's top public servant. Those three individuals, the most powerful people in the Canadian government, put direct pressure on the former attorney general. The question is very simple, since we still have not had an answer.

Was this matter discussed at cabinet, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Clerk of the Privy Council confirmed that, at every opportunity, the Prime Minister made it clear that this was a decision for the minister of justice to take.

The director of the Public Prosecution Service confirmed that, in each and every case, prosecutors exercise their discretion independently.

The deputy minister of justice confirmed that there was no direct communication in any specific case between the Prime Minister's Office and the DPP.

What is clear is that the Conservatives are saying one thing in French and something else in English. They should stop doing that.

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem with the Liberals' cover-up on this SNC-Lavalin scandal is that they are having trouble keeping their stories straight.

The Clerk of the Privy Council testified last week that there was no discussion of the special deal for SNC-Lavalin at cabinet, but the Minister of National Revenue went on the radio and said that the SNC-Lavalin deal was discussed at cabinet.

Only one of these people can be telling the truth. Which one of them is it?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I will reassure Canadians that they can trust their institutions. We will share, once again, what happened at the justice committee last week.

When it was asked if it would be appropriate for the Prime Minister and officials to discuss the matter with the Attorney General, the Attorney General confirmed that those kinds of conversations would be appropriate.

When asked about conversations about cabinet colleagues in his role as Minister of Justice and Attorney General and whether they were appropriate, the Attorney General answered, "Absolutely."

We have always and we will always have confidence in our institutions, and Canadians can as well.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have confidence in their institutions. They have lost confidence in the Liberal government.

It was the Clerk of the Privy Council who made it very clear that the SNC-Lavalin special deal was never discussed at cabinet, yet the Prime Minister refused to answer direct questions on this matter, citing cabinet confidence.

Either the Prime Minister was misleading Canadians, or the Clerk of the Privy Council was misleading Canadians. Which one of them was misleading Canadians?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives will continue to speculate. We know that is their approach. It was their approach for 10 years under Stephen Harper, and unfortunately that remains the case today.

Canadians are paying attention. They have not forgotten the rule book that the Conservatives released so that they could undermine and destroy committees. We on this side increased resources to committees, so that committees could do their important work.

Oral Questions

What was confirmed by the justice committee is that when the Clerk of the Privy Council appeared at committee to answer questions, he said, "At every opportunity verbally and in writing in December, the Prime Minister made it clear that this was the decision for the Minister of Justice to take."

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everyone in Canada deserves a safe, affordable place to call home, but the housing crisis is leaving many of us out in the cold. People need solutions now, not years from now. That is why Burnaby South elected Jagmeet Singh, a leader who understands the urgency of the housing crisis, unlike the Liberals, who fail to act.

Canadians cannot wait any longer. Why are the Liberals so quick on their feet when their rich corporate friends need something, yet refuse to ensure safe, affordable housing for those who desperately need it now?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking the member opposite for raising this very important question of the housing crisis that exists in many parts of Canada.

That is because for too many years the federal government was not a leader and was not a partner in housing. That has changed. Since 2016 we have invested an additional \$5.7 billion and have helped a million families. Last year, we launched the historic, first-ever national housing strategy, which is going to transform housing. We look forward to working with provinces and territories.

* * *

● (1455)

SENIORS

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over 350 delegates from the Canadian Labour Congress are in Ottawa today to talk about pension security and pharmacare. They echoed similar concerns brought by the coalition of retiree organizations last week in Ottawa.

It is clear that workers and retirees want the Liberals to finally take action to provide real pension security for seniors and to introduce a fully universal pharmacare program. Canadians are no longer buying the empty promises. They want solutions now. Are the Liberals listening?

When will they finally take action?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his work on the pension security file.

Our government takes pension security for seniors very seriously. It is our government that, after decades, has invested the time, energy and effort to get this right. That was included in the budget as well as my mandate letter. As a result of that, we have had consultations. We have had over 4,000 submissions. We want to have an evidence-based solution and ensure pensioners do not suffer unintended consequences.

Oral Questions

We are working hard and we are going to get this right.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the justice committee, a former judge testified that the RCMP integrity unit should thoroughly examine the Prime Minister's alleged interference with SNC-Lavalin's criminal trial.

I have a simple question. Has the Prime Minister or anyone in the PMO been contacted by the RCMP?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members of the House should know, the RCMP is totally independent. It never consults the Minister of Public Safety with respect to whether to launch or pursue an investigation, and that is exactly how it should be in a free and open democracy like ours.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was not the question that was asked. Canadians deserve an answer to this very simple question.

Has the RCMP contacted the PMO or the Prime Minister about this alleged interference in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is pursuing what is an absolutely improper line of questioning.

The fact of the matter is that the RCMP is independent and should not be dragged into controversies on the floor of the House of Commons. It enforces the laws of Canada and does it at its own volition and discretion, and that is the way it should be in a free and open democracy.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again it certainly feels like the Liberals are not in the business of answering the question. The question is quite simple and Canadians deserve to know. There is a crisis in the rule of law. This is not politics as usual. This is serious and Canadians know there is a deeper scandal.

Again, has any current or former cabinet minister or Liberal staffer been contacted by the RCMP over the SNC-Lavalin affair or anything else pertaining to the former attorney general's portfolio, yes or no?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely not aware of any activity in relation to the RCMP, neither should we be. The RCMP is completely independent and it will pursue whatever matters it deems appropriate to pursue. For the opposition to attempt to politicize the situation is absolutely improper and contrary to the best interests of law enforcement in this country.

* * *

• (1500)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on improving the quality, the

coverage, and most importantly, the price of telecommunication services for Canadians no matter where they live.

Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development speak to the latest step our government is taking to ensure Canadian consumers have the quality services they deserve at affordable prices?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for championing affordability issues.

As he has highlighted, our government has recently announced a policy directive requiring the CRTC to look at competition, affordability, consumer interests and innovation, because wireless data plans are up to 32% cheaper than the national average in regions with strong competition. We are promoting more competition and more choice so that Canadians can have more affordable plans.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Safety and it is a very direct question.

Has any staff member or any minister been contacted by the RCMP with respect to the SNC-Lavalin investigation? The answer is simple: yes or no.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I replied in my last answer, we are not aware of any such activity in relation to the RCMP and neither should we be, because the RCMP is completely independent.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the SNC-Lavalin affair, the government claims that it is protecting jobs. The Minister of Transport keeps repeating that safety is his top priority.

Meanwhile, Aéroports de Montréal, the Montreal airport authority, is raking in record profits while asking its employees to take a significant pay cut under the threat of contracting the work out. If that is not a hint of an intention to privatize, I do not know what is.

Will the minister promise that these jobs, such as those related to safety certification, will not be contracted out on the cheap?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really happy to get up and talk about the fact that since we were elected we have created 800,000 great paying jobs.

This year, we are transforming the youth employment strategy to make sure that more young people have opportunities to succeed in the workplace. We are ensuring that every young person who wants an opportunity to apply for a summer job has that opportunity. Seventy thousand young people across the country will benefit from this.

* * *

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes how important science is in Canada. We rely on science every day for clean air and water, to improve health care for Canadians and to contribute to exciting new breakthroughs that help prepare us for the jobs and economy of tomorrow.

We also know that when we invest in women, we strengthen our economy for everyone.

Could the Minister of Science and Sport tell the House how we are increasing inclusion at our universities?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science and Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that research excellence and equity go hand in hand, and with that I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary Professor Donna Strickland, who won the Nobel Prize in Physics. She is only the third woman in history to do so, the first one in 55 years.

We have made changes to the Canada excellence research chairs and the Canada research chairs, and we will be bringing Athena SWAN to Canada.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the illegal trip to the Aga Khan's billionaire island, the lucrative clam fishing contract directly awarded to an in-law, investigations on shady land deals in Brampton, four groping scandals, including the feminist Prime Minister himself, and now obstructing justice to prevent the rich executives accused of bribing the Gadhafi regime from facing a trial. Enough is enough.

Why are there two sets of rules: one that benefits the Prime Minister and his cronies, and one that hurts everyone else?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that member has definitely demonstrated where the priorities of the Conservatives are at.

We on this side have respect for committees. We have respect for the independence of the judicial system. We have respect for officers of Parliament.

We on this side lowered taxes on middle-class Canadians by increasing them on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians. Conservatives voted against it.

We on this side introduced the Canada child benefit, a tax-free benefit. Today, Statistics Canada has confirmed 278,000 kids have been lifted out of poverty. Over 800,000 Canadians are benefiting

from this program. Conservatives voted against it. Our focus will always be on Canadians.

* * *

● (1505)

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, SNC-Lavalin just lost \$1.6 billion. In real terms, this amount represents jobs lost in Quebec. What is the opposition talking about? It is talking about the Prime Minister and his bad relationship with the former minister of justice. What is the opposition talking about? It is talking about the Prime Minister and his bad relationships. What is the Prime Minister talking about? He is talking about who he can blame for his fiasco. The real issue is getting lost. Without a remediation agreement, Quebec will lose a head office and thousands of jobs.

When will the Minister of Justice sign a remediation agreement with SNC-Lavalin?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remind the hon. member that, even though the legislation exists, there are ongoing court cases, so it would be inappropriate for me to comment.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is hiding the truth, two opposition parties could not care less about workers, and thousands of jobs are in jeopardy, but no one is doing a thing. Ottawa sure has its priorities straight.

When will someone from this government realize that their inaction on the SNC-Lavalin matter could cost Quebec thousands of jobs?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We can absolutely stand up for the workers, suppliers and retirees of a company like SNC-Lavalin while at the same time comply with ethics rules and all of the other legal rules surrounding these discussions.

On this side of the House, we always stand up for workers in Quebec and across the country and for suppliers and retirees. That is what we are doing on this side of the House. We would like the opposition to talk about standing up for workers too from time to time.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, PPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2010, the MP for Papineau gave his support to a campaign for the establishment of a United Nations parliament that would have power to adopt binding regulations on Canada. His government has been imposing UN recommendations on Canada on issues such as climate change and migration.

Government Orders

Is the government planning to turn our country into a post-national subdivision of the UN or is it going to stand up for Canada as a sovereign nation deciding its own future?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we do not believe in conspiracy theories; we go with facts. The UN global compact on migration is a framework agreement that allows countries to work together on issues such as foreign credentials recognition, which is a benefit for Canada. In fact, a lot of the measures in the agreement are actually other countries catching up to what Canada is already succeeding at.

We will never apologize for being the world leader in settlement and integration of newcomers. Why? Because it is in our economic interests. It is the right thing to do, but it is also the smart thing to do. We are leading the world in talent attraction and investment, because investment follows talent.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members, and I think I need to remind members that it is the role of the Speaker to do this and not others, the presence in the gallery of Professor Donna Strickland, optical physicist and co-winner of the 2018 Nobel Prize in Physics.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: It is also my great pleasure to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of a delegation from the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies of the United Mexican States participating in the 22nd Canada-Mexico Interparliamentary Meeting. This delegation is led by Senator Antares Guadalupe Vázquez and Deputy Alfredo Femat Bañuelos.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

●(1510)

[English]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-83, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood has five minutes remaining in his speech.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will resume where I left off, which has to do with the utility of committees. I noticed that was a theme of question period, that committees are assigned tasks and committees doing their work make significant differences. Therefore, I want to go over a number of the significant differences the committee made with respect to the original Bill C-83 and the Bill C-83 that is before us as amended by the committee. We listened to witnesses and suggested changes to

the government, and in many instances the government listened to the committee and made those changes.

The bill now includes a strengthened health care review system. If the warden disagrees with a recommendation from a health care provider to move inmates in or out of SIU or to alter their conditions of confinement, the committee or senior CSC personnel, external to the institution, would review the matter. That was a Liberal amendment.

The Conservatives contributed an amendment, which said that a new provision would allow CSC staff to recommend to a health care professional that an inmate be assessed under certain conditions, such as self-harm, emotional distress, adverse drug reaction, etc.

The NDP-Green Party amendment reinserted the principle that CSC and the parole board impose the “least restrictive” measures, consistent with security. The language existed for 20 years until the previous government changed it to “necessary and proportionate”. Least restrictive is back in, thanks to the amendments provided by the NDP and Green Party.

The NDP wanted a meaningful four hours of face time. Therefore, when CSC records the fact that an inmate did not get his or her four hours out, it would now have to include in the report the reasons for refusal.

About 14 or 15 different amendments were provided by all parties. Those amendments strengthen the bill and recommend the bill to the House.

The bill would enshrine in law the principle that medical professionals in CSC must operate independently of correctional authorities. It would also require CSC to consider systemic and background factors when making decisions that would impact indigenous people in federal custody.

None of this is a panacea. Even once the bill passes and the considerable resources to implement it are put in place, there will remain a lot of work to do.

One of the amendments I did not mention was that we insisted on a five-year review. Therefore, this is an open bill. It is not a panacea, but it is to be recommended. The effective rehabilitation and safe integration of people who have broken the law is essential for public safety. That is why I support the legislation and commend it to hon. colleagues.

●(1515)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could provide his thoughts on this. When we talk about standing committees and the positive role they play, while the bill was up for debate during second reading, the minister responsible for the legislation was fairly open to receiving amendments, if the amendments could be justified. I was not at the committee stage, but my understanding is that not only did amendments come from the government benches, but from opposition parties as well. Even the leader of the Green Party was able to bring forward a series of amendments.

Government Orders

It is one thing to see them brought forward. Often, especially under the old regime of Stephen Harper, we never saw them passed. However, we have seen more and more amendments, even from opposition parties, being adopted to improve legislation. This bill is a good example of that. If there is a desire at the standing committee to have a positive outcome, we can see that positive outcome with respect to legislation changing. Today's legislation is actually better than it was before it went to committee. Could the member provide his thoughts on that issue?

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I have the delight of chairing what I regard as an excellent committee. The members work well together. The partisanship occasionally flares up, but it is by and large minimal.

With respect to this bill, there was some divergence of opinion regarding what amendments should and should not be included. However, I note that of the 14 or 15 amendments, six were from opposition parties.

I recommend this attitude of openness in amending bills to all ministers, frankly. The committees can do useful work if they are allowed to do it. Indeed, if members on the committees assert themselves in a collective fashion, the legislation going into committee can be improved before leaving committee.

As I said, this is not the end of our addressing solitary confinement. There are more things to be done. This is not a panacea bill, but it is a bill to be recommended to members.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, once again we hear our colleagues across the way mention that they consulted broadly with respect to Bill C-83, yet at committee, witness after witness talked about the failure to consult properly. In fact, the correctional investigator of Canada told the public safety committee that all the consultations seemed to have been done internally. To his knowledge, there were no consultations with external stakeholders. He commented, "I think that's why you end up with something that is perhaps not fully thought out", such as Bill C-83.

It is so odd to hear time and again that the Liberals have consulted broadly. It seems that it is a tick box in their vernacular to say they have consulted broadly. All they have done is rushed this legislation through.

Witness after witnesses expressed concerns with respect to Bill C-83. Why does our hon. colleague feel the need to rush Bill C-83 through after faulty consultation?

• (1520)

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I partially agree with my hon. colleague in that there was considerable criticism of the original bill presented to the committee. However, that is the point of a committee. Members listen to testimony and suggest amendments. These amendments are before the House as we speak. There are 14 amendments, six of which are from opposition parties. If that is not appropriate committee work, I do not know what is.

The other gun to the head, so to speak, is that there are two outstanding lawsuits. If we do not move this legislation forward, there will be no solitary confinement units or segregation units in prison. That would be a shame.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure today to rise to speak to Bill C-83, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another act.

This legislation proposes to limit administrative segregation in correctional facilities; replace these facilities with new structured intervention units, or SIUs; introduce body scanners for inmates; set parameters for access to health care; and formalize expectations for indigenous offenders, female offenders and offenders with diagnosed mental health issues.

I have the privilege of chairing the public accounts committee, and at committee, we work very closely with the Auditor General's office. We studied the reports the Auditor General released, and much of what I want to speak to today actually quotes from the Auditor General's reports.

One of those reports, in the fall of 2017 reports of the Auditor General of Canada, was entitled "Preparing Women Offenders for Release". The objective of this audit was to determine whether Correctional Service Canada assigned and delivered correctional programs, interventions and mental health services to women offenders in federal custody, including indigenous women offenders, that responded appropriately to their unique needs and helped them successfully reintegrate into the community.

As noted by the Auditor General, "Under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, Correctional Service Canada is required to provide programs and services that respond to the needs of women offenders."

What the Auditor General found was that, again, CSC had not implemented an initial security classification process designed specifically for women offenders, and as a result, "some women offenders risked being held at inappropriate security levels". Furthermore, CSC had not implemented an appropriate tool for referring women offenders to correctional programs that were in line with their risk of reoffending, nor had they "assessed the effectiveness of its correctional programs in addressing the factors associated with a risk of reoffending". Last, and most relevant to our debate today, the Auditor General concluded that CSC "had not confirmed whether its tools correctly identified women offenders with mental health issues or assigned them the appropriate level of care."

Paragraph 5.104 of "Report 5" revealed, "We also found that out of 18 women offenders identified with a serious mental illness with significant impairment, 7 were placed in segregation at some point during 2016."

Government Orders

According to the Auditor General's report, CSC acknowledged that segregation for persons with serious mental health issues "should be limited." I draw my colleagues' attention to the word "limited". The AG disagreed with limited use and recommended that CSC ensure that women offenders "with serious mental illness with significant impairment are not placed in segregation" and that there be improved oversight and enhanced observation of these offenders.

Correctional Service Canada agreed with the Auditor General's recommendations, and therefore, the public accounts committee had asked in our report that by May 31, 2019, CSC provide us with a report regarding the relocation of observation cells out of segregation ranges. Obviously, this request was thwarted by the introduction of Bill C-83 on October 16, 2018, less than five months after the public accounts committee tabled our report, which would eliminate administrative segregation and establish the SIUs, or structured intervention units.

• (1525)

Proposed section 32 of Bill C-83 says:

The purpose of a structured intervention unit is to (a) provide an appropriate living environment for an inmate who cannot be maintained in the mainstream inmate population for security or other reasons; (b) provide the inmate with an opportunity for meaningful human contact and an opportunity to participate in programs and to have access to services that respond to the inmate's specific needs and the risks posed by the inmate.

In other words, CSC is simply being compelled to do exactly what it is already mandated to do: deliver correctional programs, interventions and mental health services that respond appropriately to an offender's unique needs.

As pointed out earlier, an audit by the Office of the Auditor General revealed, with respect to women offenders, that CSC has failed in its mandate. In the fall 2018 report of the Auditor General, it was also revealed that CSC has not properly managed offenders under community supervision. As of April 2018, approximately 9,100 federal offenders, or 40% of all federal offenders, were under community supervision. According to "Report 6" of the fall 2018 Auditor General's report:

The number of offenders released into community supervision had grown and was expected to keep growing. However, Correctional Service Canada had reached the limit of how many offenders it could house in the community.... Despite the growing backlog [for accommodation], and despite research that showed that a gradual supervised release gave offenders a better chance of successful reintegration, Correctional Service Canada did not have a long-term plan to respond to its housing pressures.

CSC "did not properly manage offenders under community supervision". Parole officers "did not always meet with offenders as often as they should have", nor did they always "monitor [offenders] compliance with special conditions imposed by the Parole Board of Canada."

We met with CSC last week, and we discussed this very report. These deficiencies were brought out with an action plan to correct them. However, I would humbly suggest that the Liberal government should be focused on ensuring that Correctional Service Canada fully meets its mandate, as the safety and security of Canadians depends on the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into society upon their release.

To meet its mandate, a good start would be for Correctional Service Canada to start listening to its correctional workers. I am fortunate to have Drumheller penitentiary in my constituency. Over the years, I have met countless times with wardens, correctional officers and other staff in Drumheller. I can tell members that there are concerns about this bill. Concerns have come forward to the public safety and emergency preparedness committee. Again, I am concerned that many of these correctional officers are not being listened to. In fact, Jason Godin, president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, stated that they were not consulted on Bill C-83. We have a leader of one of the unions of correctional officers, and his frustration is that the Liberal government has not consulted.

The Correctional Investigator has said:

What I would agree with is that there has been very little detail provided by the Correctional Service or the government on how this [Bill C-83] is going to be implemented. If you read the proposed bill as it's currently written, there's a lot of stuff that seems to be pushed to regulation, as prescribed by regulations. We don't know what those regulations would look like. I think that's why there's a lot of uneasiness about this particular piece of legislation.

Given the findings of the OAG, I believe that this uneasiness with respect to the safety and security of Canadians extends well beyond Bill C-83. I certainly know, from the number of calls and emails I have received from correctional workers, that considerable uneasiness exists in the Drumheller Institution. The reason for that anxiety ranges from concerns about their safety and their colleagues' safety to pay issues around Phoenix. I currently have 70 files, some inactive, on Phoenix.

• (1530)

We have a bill now that would affect correctional officers, and they are bemoaning the fact that the government is not listening.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am sure that my friend and colleague can recall the approach to governance of former prime minister Stephen Harper. Under a deficit-reduction action plan, the Conservatives actually cut \$846 million from CSC in their last term. How did that help rehabilitation and public safety?

The Conservatives talk a big line, but they cut hundreds of millions of dollars. How do they reconcile the support they supposedly have for correctional officers and public safety when they had that sort of massive cut in the dying years of Stephen Harper's government?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, I am not going to get into the long issues with the current government. The Liberals came in promising low deficits, a cap on deficits, and the Liberals have thrown every plan out the window and just thrown money at every problem.

The problem is that when it comes to corrections, my colleague tells me that over the next three years, the government is saying that it is going to cut over \$200 million. The Liberals are going to cut from public safety and from the Correctional Service Canada file.

Government Orders

I know one thing. Sometimes when governments look, they try to find ways to streamline programs. When a program is in they come in with new programs. There is always a shuffling around of funding. I think every Canadian understands now that when the Conservative Party was in power, the Conservatives cared about law and order. They were concerned about a justice system. They were concerned about a correctional penal system. They understood that our guiding principle always has been the protection of society and making sure that dangerous offenders are in a penitentiary, not the 9,100 we see out under community supervision somewhere.

There are massive differences of opinion between the current government and our former government, but make no mistake. All Canadians understand that when it came to law and order, policing and the issues that deal with prisons, parole, police and CSIS, the Conservative government got it, and they got public safety.

• (1535)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, there is a large philosophical gap between those who see our prisons as correctional facilities, with the hope that people will re-enter the population, and the notion of “tough on crime” we heard through the Harper years.

Because my friend from Battle River—Crowfoot is, in fact, a friend, I will ask him this. The cuts that occurred in the Harper years included eliminating the chaplaincy program in our prisons. They also included eliminating the farm program, prison farms, so that people who had been convicted of crimes could get outdoors and do a good day's work, as I know my hon. colleague does, where he lives in the Prairies, on his farm.

Do we not all in this place owe it to people who find themselves incarcerated to try to get them on a path to being able to take up a job in society again? Can we not stop saying that if they are in prison, they must be in the worst possible conditions, and find those conditions that actually lead to their being able to play a useful role in society? Why cancel the chaplaincy program? Why get rid of prison farms?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, I can recall that when we looked at the prison farm program, one of the interesting components of what we noticed when that program was phased out was that there were very few people, after being integrated and rehabilitated, who ever went out and became employed on a farm. Any of the great lessons they would have learned while they were out working on someone's farm were not necessarily lessons that enhanced opportunities for them to get jobs after. There were different programs, such as carpentry and welding. More resources were put into those programs, because that is where the jobs were when these individuals left the penitentiary system.

I am personally not in favour of cutting a chaplaincy program. The faith component is one that does help with rehabilitation. However, that was the answer on the farm program.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to stand to speak once again on Bill C-83, which amends the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

The Liberals seem to have a long history and a running streak of putting forward bills focusing more on criminals' rights than on those of the victims, and in some ways this bill seems to be another one of

those. It is mostly a poorly thought-out bill that provides no resources or thoughts to employee safety among those working in correction services.

The government should have spent time consulting with CSC workers, figuring out how it could reconfigure the prisons and how it would also pay for all of these changes. Bill C-83 is another example of the government making a big announcement and thinking that everything ends at the announcement, that everything is done, without putting any planning behind it.

We have seen this with the government and its infrastructure program. It announces \$180 billion in infrastructure spending, but kind of overlooks the fact that \$90 billion of it was commitments from the previous government.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer is not able to locate within the budget or the estimates a significant amount of the spending. The Senate committee did a study on the infrastructure spending, and it said that the only metric for success in infrastructure was how much money was spent, not how many roads were built or how many highways were upgraded; it was just how much money was spent.

We see the same thing from the Liberals with their housing plan. They make grandiose announcements, standing in this House again and again to say it is \$40 billion. Kevin Page, the former parliamentary budget officer, reported that it is actually about \$1.5 billion. The Prime Minister and the parliamentary secretary responsible for housing stood up in this House and said that a million families have been helped under this plan, believing that if they just make an announcement, then everything happens. It turns out that if we look at the departmental results plan, it was 7,500 families helped, not a million.

We see this again and again. Bill C-83 is no different. I will get to that later.

There are some things in Bill C-83 that I can support. The Liberal government is much like a broken watch, which is correct twice a day, and sometimes the government can be correct in its bills. The bill calls for body scanners to prevent contraband and drugs from getting into the prison. I fully support that. I wish the Liberals would modify it so that everyone coming in gets a body scan.

However, I do have to agree with the people I have talked to at corrections services. Why are we trying to stop drugs, but at the same time bringing in and handing out needles to the prisoners? These are needles that we have heard are being used as weapons against CSC workers.

I also like the fact that Bill C-83 gives more consideration to indigenous offenders. It is no secret that the indigenous population is overrepresented in prisons, and that has to be addressed, so I do agree with that measure. However, there are too many parts of the bill that would negatively impact the safety of corrections officers.

Government Orders

We all know of the Ashley Smith situation, which was a tragedy, and the government should do everything in its power to prevent such an occurrence from happening again. However, a poorly thought-out plan and an underfunded bill that just bans segregation is not the answer.

We have to keep in mind that it is not just inmates who are committing crimes who are going into segregation. Often it is a victim. They are put in there to assure their safety by moving them away from their abuser. They obviously do not want to name their abuser because of prison rules, so to speak, so the assaults continue unless the victim is moved into segregation. Unfortunately, that person eventually has to desegregate back into the prison system or change prisons. Nothing in Bill C-83 addresses that issue.

A CBC report says segregation is not the deterrent it once was. Prisoners now receive all of their possessions, their television and all of their belongings, within 24 hours of being put in segregation. Another CBC report quoted a couple of corrections officers. One of them stated that whereas the more violent inmates used to be in separate containers, now they are all in one bag, so they are just waiting for one to go off. That sets the rest of them off, and they end up with murder, stabbings, slashing, and officer injuries higher than ever.

Another one is saying that the inmates can get away with a lot more than they used to in the past, and that contributes to the growing violence and the crisis in corrections. Another says that all removing segregation does, especially disciplinary segregation, is soften reprisals for bad behaviour. Inmates know there is one less tool for corrections officers to use to maintain order and ensure their own safety.

● (1540)

In September 2017, with respect to a provincial study that I imagine would also cover federal, the CBC reported a massive upswing, a 50% increase, in inmate assaults over the five years that segregation had been removed or reduced.

Under this proposal, whenever inmates move from segregation to have their additional hours in the open, two officers will be needed to escort them. I have to ask where those resources will come from. If I look at the manpower figures in the departmental plan for the Correctional Service of Canada, which shows what its budget would be several years out, I see that the figures are identical in 2021 to what they are now. We are planning all this extra work for the officers, but there is no plan to provide extra officers. In fact, if we look at the plan, which has been signed off by the Minister of Public Safety himself, we see that the Liberals have cut the number of officers on staff from what it was when the Harper government was in charge. Again, where are the resources coming from?

As well, where are the added dollars coming from to renovate these new cells? I have heard the Minister of Public Safety stand and say that there is \$80 million from the last budget and \$400 million in the estimates. That is fine, but when we look at the departmental plans, again we see that from last year in 2017 to this year, the Liberals have cut \$152.5 million from corrections services, and in the next couple of years, they are cutting an additional \$225 million.

If they are spending \$400 million on renovations and resources and the end result is \$225 million less, where is the missing \$600 million? I am sure the Parliamentary Budget Officer will be unable to find where this money is, as was the case with the missing infrastructure money.

Getting back to the departmental plans, these plans lay out the priorities for the government for this department. Again, the plans are reviewed and signed by the Minister of Public Safety. In this plan, there are 20 priorities, yet not a single one mentions or addresses officer safety or the safety of anyone working for corrections services.

The government, when discussing Bill C-83, brags about how it is the first time ever it has given the head of Correctional Services of Canada a mandate letter. I looked at the mandate letter. There are 1,400 words in the mandate letter for the head of the CSC. Let us keep in mind the government is so proud of this letter. Of the 1,400 words, 24 are about victims of crime, and just 52 are about the safety or well-being of corrections officers. The 52 words include this gem: "I encourage you to instill within CSC a culture of ongoing self-reflection."

Can members imagine an inmate coming at them with a knife or a needle? What would their response be? If we looked it up in the manual, we would find "self-reflection". Self-reflection sounds like something that would be more appropriate after being confronted after having groped someone at a concert, not when dealing with inmates in a criminal institution.

The president of the union of correctional officers, Rob Finucan, described how a guard in the Millhaven Institution was slashed across the face with a shard or knife. Why? It was because of the new rule that inmates can only be handcuffed in front and not behind. The inmate was cuffed and being moved to segregation. He had a shard of glass or a knife with him and cut across the face of the officer. Luckily, the officer's eye was not lost, but that happened because of rules we are putting into effect without any consideration for the officers.

In the minute I have left, I will end with the money set aside for mental health for inmates in the last budget. No one can argue with that, as it is obviously a very important issue.

Money has also been put aside for mental health for RCMP officers. There is 40% more money put aside per capita for inmates than for RCMP officers. That sums up the government's priorities in a nutshell: more money for criminals, less for the RCMP and less for our valued officers in prisons.

I think it is time for the government to show some self-reflection on this issue.

● (1545)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the summary by the hon. member across the way at the very end was interesting in its reference to less money for the RCMP and correctional services. Is the previous government's \$300-million cut to correctional services and the RCMP, as well as cuts to emergency services, the route he wants us to take, similar to what the previous Harper government had done?

Government Orders

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I will repeat what I stated. In its budget, the government is putting aside 40% more per capita for mental health for inmates than it is for RCMP officers serving and protecting Canadians. The priority of the government seems to be putting inmates ahead of those who are on the streets risking their lives for Canadians. It is wrong.

Continuing on to his comments about cuts, I suggest he read his own government's departmental plan. Obviously, the Minister of Public Safety has not read it, even though he signed off on it. Over the next couple of years, the government is reducing the corrections budget by \$225 million, on top of the \$152.5 million that it cut from last year to this year.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the criticisms we heard over and over again during the process of getting this bill to report stage is about the lack of consultation with stakeholders, with the correctional officers' union and with the Correctional Services of Canada ombudsman.

One of the other criticisms was that because of the lack of consultation and the rushed method in which this bill is being brought forward, many of the legislative pieces that should be nailed down more precisely are going to be left to the regulatory process. As chair of the scrutiny of regulations committee, I can attest to the fact that too often the regulations on any of these bills go way beyond the mandate that the legislature intended.

Could my colleague comment on the lack of consultation with the people who are going to be impacted by this bill—the correctional officers on the front lines whose safety is at stake—and also on the lack of a proper legislative framework to ensure the regulatory process is authorized?

• (1550)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, my colleague brings up a very valid point about the lack of consultation. Throughout the day we have heard a lot of quotes from various correctional services workers about lack of consultation. One of them in my riding wrote to me and said, “I have lost all faith in my employer. And I'm not the only one who feels that way. No one should feel that way entirely.”

On top of that, we have the recently produced employee surveys for the entire government. In the case of correctional services, 51% of workers disagreed with the question that asked if they would describe their workplace as being psychologically healthy. Another question asked if employees felt the quality of their work suffered because of having to do the same or more work with fewer resources, and 53% of CSC workers are saying that they have been asked to do more with less resources, which is putting their safety at risk.

The government should listen to its own survey. It should listen to its employees. There is a crisis going on with CSC, and it is not being addressed. As well, it is not being helped by bringing closure on debate of such an important bill as this one.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have time for just one more short question.

The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, the bill talks about structured intervention units. However, when we read Bill C-83, we see that it covertly replicates administrative segregation.

One of the major differences is that inmates who spend 22 to 23 hours a day in segregation will now spend only 20 hours a day in segregation, but still for an indefinite period of time. A number of courts, including the courts in Ontario and British Columbia, found that to be unconstitutional.

It is unconstitutional because inmates can be kept in segregation for an indefinite period of time and because there is no oversight. Without independent oversight, segregation can aggravate mental health problems and produce permanent negative mental health effects. It has been proven that many indicators of mental illness, such as psychosis and suicide attempts, can be seen as early as 48 hours after segregation. People have committed suicide because they were placed in—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I gave the member a lot of time. There was not much time left, and I said that we only had time for a brief question. I will therefore ask the member to keep his answer brief.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I wish the member could continue, because she has brought up a lot of very valid questions about shortcomings in the bill. We need a lot more consultation with constitutional lawyers on this. We need a lot more consultation with the CSC unions and health care professionals. By shutting down debate and muzzling those people, the Liberals are doing a disservice to Canadians, including the inmates they are pretending to be helping and CSC workers.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for this informative debate. It is too bad our friends across the way, and I say “friends” loosely, have once again limited this debate. As I said earlier today in this debate, it has to be 60 times that the government has forced closure on debate on legislation.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-83, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another act. This legislation has been proposed to eliminate the administrative segregation in correctional facilities and to replace these facilities with new structured intervention units, which I will refer to as SIUs during my speech.

The bill also introduces body scanners for inmates, sets parameters for access to health care, and formalizes exceptions for indigenous offenders, female offenders and offenders with diagnosed mental health issues, among a few other things. It also expands on transfers and allows for the commissioner to assign a security classification to each penitentiary or any area in a penitentiary.

Government Orders

I have risen to speak to this legislation a number of times and expressed the Conservatives' concerns. Our number one concern is consultation. No matter how many times our friends across the way say they have consulted thoroughly from coast to coast on this, we know through witness testimony that witness after witness expressed serious concerns with this piece of legislation. Some of the comments were that it is flawed to the core.

We always have concerns when we talk about the safety and security of those we entrust and empower to protect Canadians. Imagine that a correctional service guard reports to work and does not have all the tools required to do the job. We need to make sure first responders, and indeed correctional officers are first responders, are provided the tools and resources they need to do their job effectively and securely, but also to return home and remain healthy at all times.

The Union of Canadian Correctional Officers has repeatedly voiced its concerns with this. As a matter of fact, the head of the national prison guards union predicts a bloodbath behind bars as the federal government moves to end solitary confinement in Canadian prisons. In a newspaper interview, the union president went on to explain that segregated inmates are supervised at a 2:1 guard-to-prisoner ratio when they are not in their units. He said, "No thought has been given to what measures we need to take to make sure no one gets hurt." When he says "no one gets hurt", he means the correctional officers who are tasked with making sure that Canadians remain safe and secure and that inmates remain safe and secure among the inmate population. He wants to make sure they have the tools to do their jobs.

The president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers last year wrote a letter to the minister and said that over the last year, over 140 violent attacks on correctional officers had taken place. Let us imagine being a security guard or correctional officer in charge of over 40 inmates. We heard the flowery language from our friends across the way when they said everybody deserves a chance. Paul Bernardo and Clifford Olson are the kinds of people housed in solitary confinement.

• (1555)

With this piece of legislation, Bill C-83, not only does the union have some serious concerns that it is not being listened to, but we also know that this program has not been fully costed out. As a matter of fact, Correctional Service Canada managers have been asked to review spending and find some efficiencies. Regardless of whether the Liberals say there is \$448 million going to this program over six years, the managers have been asked to find some efficiencies.

Every day, these officers go to work and their lives are put in jeopardy. They are there to protect Canadians. They are there to make sure that the worst of the worst stay behind bars. Whether it is Bill C-75 or Bill C-83, what we see with the government is that it is getting softer and softer on crime. Bill C-83 also looks at reclassification of certain crimes, to bring the prison population down from 12,000 to even less.

On that point, I want to bring up a case I brought up earlier today to the minister, and that is the case of Cody Legebokoff. He is Canada's youngest serial killer. In Cariboo—Prince George, he is

responsible for killing four young women. He killed Loren Leslie, age 15, Natasha Montgomery, Jill Stuchenko and Cynthia Maas. To this day, the Montgomerys are still trying to find out through the court system if Cody Legebokoff knows where the remains of their daughter are.

He has refused to take any responsibility for this crime. He was sentenced at the end of 2014, yet we found out over the last month that he was transferred from maximum to medium security in early 2019, with very little notice. As a matter of fact, two of the four families did not receive any notification.

In sentencing him, Justice Parrett said, "The injuries caused in each case were massive and disfiguring, the object of each attack appearing to be aimed at not simply killing the victims but degrading and destroying them." Justice Parrett further said, "He lacks any shred of empathy or remorse," and, "He should never be allowed to walk among us again."

Now we know that Legebokoff has been transferred to a prison here in Ontario from British Columbia, and even Correctional Service Canada's website, where it talks about transfers or the safety and security reclassification of inmates, says that assigning security classifications is "not an exact science".

We should be arming our front-line workers with every tool so that they can make the best decisions, and so they can remain safe and secure at all times. That means physically as well as mentally. How is it that we are now giving more rights to our criminals than to victims and their families, or to those we trust and empower to protect us?

It is quite concerning when time after time we see our friends across the way stand up, put their hands on their hearts and say, "Trust us." They say they have the best intentions to do well and are looking after Canadians, yet we see this type of misstep.

Bill C-83 is yet another failed piece of legislation. The victims' families and the victims of crime deserve better, and so do our first responders and our correctional officers. All they are asking for is to be heard, yet the Liberal members continue to turn a blind eye and cover their ears when those concerns are being voiced.

• (1600)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member has risen a number of times today to criticize the government for the lack of time that has been allowed for debate. However, approximately one minute into his speech, he said, "I have risen to speak to this legislation a number of times," as members can review through the record.

The bill has, in fact, been before the House on a number of occasions. It went to first reading in October. The bill then went to second reading on October 23. It then went to committee, where committee members had the opportunity to study it and provide feedback for the House's consideration. It then came back to the House for report stage, and we are now finally at third reading.

Why does the member stand up time and time again to make the criticism that there is a lack of opportunity to participate in debate on the bill, even though by his own words he has had the opportunity to speak to the bill on a number of occasions?

Government Orders

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague across the way has monopolized a ton of time on the other side, but I want to get back to this flawed piece of legislation, Bill C-83. There are serious concerns. The Union of Canadian Correctional Officers has said its members are not being heard.

The needle exchange is one area we did not discuss. We talk about providing tools and resources to ensure that we are keeping our correctional officers safe, yet the government is allowing needles to freely enter our correctional system. There are no restrictions in that respect. Inmates can go back to their cells to do drugs, and there is no onus on them to bring the needles back.

Let us imagine a correctional officer having to go into a cell to do an administrative check or a security check. The officer does not know whether there is a needle with bodily fluids in it, or whether the sharp end of a needle might be used as a weapon.

That is shameful. These are concerns that the correctional service union has brought up time and time again, and the government, including our hon. colleague across the way, refused to listen.

•(1605)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, amendments were made to the bill at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. Out of the 22 amendments proposed by the NDP, only two were adopted. It was the same thing for the Conservatives. Out of the 16 amendments they proposed, only one was adopted. However, all 21 Liberal amendments were adopted.

I want to know if my colleague thinks that the Liberals were reasonable in their review of the Conservative and NDP amendments.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I should have mentioned this. When the Liberals stand in the House, they look straight into the camera and tell the Canadians listening in and those in the gallery to trust them, as they have everyone's interests at heart. They always talk about working collaboratively with all parties, telling us we should let committees do the good work they do. However, witness after witness has expressed serious concerns about this, and the bill does not reflect those concerns.

Our friends in the NDP and in the official opposition have always attacked the Liberals' pieces of legislation faithfully, trusting our friends across the way. Sadly, time after time, that trust, just like in everything else the government has done, has been broken by their not allowing the amendments through.

We are always told that the Liberals know best. While they like to talk a good game, their actions leave us wanting, for sure. It is shameful that Bill C-83 is being rushed through, and that the serious recommendations and requests from the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers are not being heard at all.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-83, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another act. This piece of legislation proposes to do the following: eliminate administrative segregation in correctional facilities; replace these facilities with new

structured intervention units, or SIUs; introduce body scanners for inmates; set the parameters of access to health care; and formalize exceptions for indigenous offenders, female offenders and offenders with diagnosed mental health issues.

On any given day in Canada there are roughly 40,000 prisoners in custody. From coast to coast, there are eight maximum security facilities, 19 medium security facilities, 15 minimum and 10 multidisciplinary facilities. Canada has 18,000 Canadian government employees looking after these prisoners, of which 10,000 are on the front line. These are either correctional officers, parole officers or health care workers.

While I do not sit on the committee that reviewed this piece of legislation, I have been made aware of some very striking testimony by the Correctional Service Canada ombudsman, as well as many stakeholders, including these front-line workers who faithfully serve every day.

It is clear that the Liberal government, which campaigned on engaging and consulting with Canadians, has thrown all intentions of such actions out the window, as there was clearly very little of it done in this case, if any. Prominent witnesses, such as the CSC ombudsman, the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, and civil liberties and indigenous groups, all commented on the lack of consultation and their concern that too much of the legislation is being left to regulation.

I just want to touch on that for a few seconds because, as co-chair of the scrutiny of regulations committee, I can testify to the importance of the fact that any law that is passed in the House has to have an adequate legislative framework so that the regulations are actually authorized by the legislation that is passed. All too often, we have examples from various departments across the Government of Canada where regulatory mechanisms are put in place and actually enacted, in some cases, for many years without the adequate legislative authority for them to do that. It is very important that adequate legislative authority is given here, yet we have had many of our witnesses testify to the fact that this is the case in this situation and there is not adequate legislative authority.

Ivan Zinger, the Correctional Investigator of Canada had this to say:

All the consultations seem to have been done internally. To my knowledge, there have been no consultations with external stakeholders. I think that's why you end up with something that is perhaps not fully thought out.

The Elizabeth Fry Societies said this was a bad bill. It said that structural intervention units are not needed, that it failed to focus on the programs and that there was a lack of oversight. It is concerned about proposed section 81, due to the workings of indigenous governing bodies.

The John Howard Society calls it a bad bill. It wanted to know what the difference was between solitary confinement and structural intervention. It said there was no difference. The bill changed the words but did not change anything. That sounds pretty familiar with the government over the last three and a half years. There are great sounding words but very little action and very little follow-through.

Government Orders

This is not the first time that the Liberal Government has ignored consultations with the corrections community while unilaterally implementing its own ideological beliefs. Another time occurred at the Grand Valley Institution for Women, which is close to my riding. This correctional facility was one of two in Canada that was mandated to implement a prisoner needle exchange program, putting both correctional officers, as well as other inmates at risk. On Monday, June 25, a needle exchange program was introduced to the Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener.

It is very concerning that the Liberal government commanded Correctional Service Canada to approve this program, which sends the wrong message to prisoners, to victims of crime and to all Canadians. This program will give prisoners who are convicted of violent crimes access to needles in order to inject themselves with substances that are illegal among the general public, as well as in prison.

• (1610)

I agree with the Ontario regional president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, Rob Finucan, who raised the concern that this program puts correctional officers in harm's way and is forcing officers to turn a blind eye to illegal activity in the prison system.

I realize that illegal drugs make their way into our prison system and that there are nearly 1,500 drug seizures in prisons each year. However, the solution to this is not to turn a blind eye but rather to effectively enforce Correctional Service Canada's zero tolerance policy.

The previous Conservative government took action and cracked down on this problem by increasing random drug testing, investing significantly in drug interdiction and creating tough mandatory prison sentences for selling drugs in prisons. My constituents and all Canadians would like to see more of this action, not the normalization of the use of illegal drugs in prisons.

We also need to be investing far more in treatment and in prevention programs. I have on my desk a petition from constituents all across Canada who are calling on the government to end this prisoner needle exchange program. I have not had time to table this petition yet, partly because of moving to orders of the day and then closure motions. These petitioners are calling on the Liberal government to end this prisoner needle exchange program. The Union of Canadian Correctional Officers was not consulted on this plan, which puts its members and the Canadian public at risk.

The previous Conservative government passed the Drug-Free Prisons Act, which revokes parole for those who are caught using drugs behind bars. Under the new regulations, an inmate who is approved for the prisoner needle exchange program is not even required to disclose to the Parole Board that he or she is in the program.

The petitioners are calling on the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety to end the prisoner needle exchange program and implement measures that would increase the safety of correctional officers and the surrounding community.

The first and most important role of any government is to keep its citizens safe, not focusing on making criminals' lives more

comfortable. I will always focus my efforts on giving victims a strong voice in the justice system and ensure that convicted criminals do face the full force of the law.

Unfortunately, we have also seen this heavy-handed decision by the Liberal health minister to force communities that do not want them to have so-called safe injection sites. Canadian families expect safe and healthy communities in which to raise their children. The Respect for Communities Act, which was introduced by the previous Conservative government, gave police, residents and municipal leaders a say when it came to opening an injection site within their communities.

Dangerous and addictive drugs tear families apart. They promote criminal behaviour and they destroy lives. Instead of making it easier for drug addicts to consume drugs, the Liberal government should support treatment and recovery programs to get addicts off drugs and enact heavy mandatory minimum sentences to crack down on drug traffickers.

I do hope that the Liberal government will stop and consider the negative message that this needle exchange program is sending and reverse this policy as quickly as possible for the sake of correctional officers and inmates, as well as citizens of the Region of Waterloo and in fact all Canadians.

It is also important to note that since learning of this program, my office has been in contact with Jason Godin, head of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, who has been expressing his anger that his members were not consulted on a matter that directly affects their safety. They were not consulted, a common complaint with this legislation in spite of all the flowery language earlier in the 2015 campaign that the Liberals would be a government that would consult Canadians widely.

I have also received petitions from inmates at the Grand Valley Institution for Women who are against this program as it increases the risk to them.

One of the more profound statements that I have read recently on this was in a newspaper article by Jason Godin. He was quoted in the Vancouver Sun as saying, "attacks on guards and inmates have been increasing as the use of segregation has decreased ahead of new legislation to change the prison system."

There are many reasons not to support this bad piece of legislation but let me summarize our position this way.

We on this side of the House are opposed to the inaction in regard to ensuring that high-risk offenders are not transferred to low-security facilities. The legislation would empower the commissioner to sub-designate parts of prisons, which could lead to more cases where higher security prisoners are kept in a lower security space based on technicalities.

Government Orders

It is also concerning that the Liberals are moving away from segregation particularly as a deterrent to bad behaviour, as it strips front-line officers of tools to manage difficult prisoners.

The legislation lacks support from every major stakeholder who appeared before committee, from left to right—

• (1615)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, time is up. I did allow a little more time, but if the hon. member wants to add anything else he can do it during questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in his speech the member talked about the role of government and how one of the most, if not the most, important role of government is to keep its citizens safe. I could not disagree with him more. On this side of the House, we believe that when people are incarcerated, we as society have a role to properly rehabilitate individuals so they can be reintegrated into society as productive contributing members of society in those communities.

The Conservative approach, and what we are hearing from them, is one where they want to lock people up, leave them in there until their sentences have expired and then let them out into the public. How can he possibly suggest that such a plan and such a position on rehabilitation, their lack of interest in doing that, really at the end of the day ensures that citizens are properly protected when those inmates are released years down the road?

• (1620)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, that is a very naive question, because he is assuming these are mutually exclusive. Keeping Canadians safe and implementing treatment and recovery programs go hand in hand. In fact, I said that in my speech. The Liberal government should support treatment and recovery programs to get addicts off drugs. Of course we want prisoners rehabilitated. Of course we want them to reintegrate into society. However, we want to be sure that before they do that, it is safe to do so.

We had an example this summer where a high-risk offender was transferred far prematurely to a low or medium-security facility. We agree that perhaps toward the end of a sentence, at six months or a year before the end of a sentence, there should be some of those programs, but to do it eight years before the sentence ends is foolhardy.

I will go back and say that, yes, the responsibility of government is to protect its citizens while at the same time ensuring rehabilitation and recovery treatment programs.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to know what my colleague thinks of the fact that many of the inmates who are put in administrative segregation for an indeterminate amount of time, sometimes up to 23 hours a day, suffer from mental health problems.

In my opinion, it would make more sense to give them access to mental health services and programs to address the root causes of

these problems instead of exacerbating them by placing the inmates in administrative segregation. In fact, when they are released, they pose a public health threat. It makes no sense to propose such a solution in our prisons.

Should the government not review these measures, which have also been deemed unconstitutional?

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, again, we are assuming they are mutually exclusive. We can have adequate mental health services along with appropriate segregation that keeps a prisoner from harming himself or others. However, at the same point, we need adequate personnel to provide the human contact the prisoner needs, not only to protect the prisoner but to actually engage in rehabilitation and treatment programs.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, a quote from one of the CSC officers says, “We are the ones working the ranges, day in and day out, 24-7, yet we have to wait for a decision from our managers as to whether we’re going to act or respond to a specific behaviour”.

In the public service survey 77% of correctional service officers said their work suffers because of overly complicated or unnecessary procedures imposed by the government. My colleague talked a lot about the lack of consultation on the bill. I wonder if he could expand on that and how it is hurting such issues at hand.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, as I said in my comments earlier, I used to represent the riding where Grand Valley prison facility is housed, but the changes to the boundaries in the last election moved that. It is currently not in my riding, but it is next door. I have had the privilege of visiting the Grand Valley institution on a number of occasions and speaking with the front-line workers there. I have also had the privilege of speaking personally with Jason Godin, the chief of the correctional officers union. I know one of their major concerns is their own safety.

When we implement these kinds of changes without consultation with them, this is where the big problem lies.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to join the debate on Bill C-83, a bill dealing with some of the rules around incarceration in Canada. I want to make a few general points about the principles that should guide our approach before I move to the particulars of the legislation itself.

Our approach to criminal justice should affirm the dignity of the human person, which includes personal responsibility and the capacity to change. Both are key elements. Its primary goal should be rehabilitation and the protection of society, which obviously go together. If people are rehabilitated, then they no longer present a risk to society. If they are not rehabilitated, they can be a risk to those around them, even when they are in prison.

Government Orders

It seems to me that both extremes in the criminal justice debate deny in some way the dignity of the person. Some believe individual criminality is necessarily the result of social factors as opposed to bad moral decision-making. Social factors can obviously contribute to a person's situation, but the extreme leftist analysis, which reduces everything to social factors, denies the dignity and agency of persons who are in vulnerable situations.

No matter people's circumstances, they do have a choice. They have a choice to try to make the best out of their situation or on the other end, a choice to engage in criminal activity. It seems that this recognition of dignity, and therefore responsibility, is the necessary grounds of rehabilitation. People must recognize their own agency in order to turn their lives around.

We also reject the extreme that those who commit crimes cannot turn their lives around. Some would want us to write people off too easily. However, our own life experience should teach us that people can change their patterns of behaviour for the better. Many people who have committed crimes can change, and there is a public interest and moral obligation for us to do all we can to help with the process. This means maximizing incentives and supports to people who are on that journey.

A criminal justice policy that fully affirms human dignity, recognizing personal responsibility for crime and the ability to change, would assign sentences that are both tough and variable. Tough and variable sentences is an approach that ensures people who are rehabilitated can get back into society and contribute. However, people who refuse to take the steps necessary to turn their lives around remain in prison until they do. Providing strong incentives and program supports that maximize the chances of turnaround is indeed in everybody's interest.

Our approach to sentencing should also take scarce resources into account. If people who are no longer a threat to society remain in prison, they are consuming resources that could be better spent on crime prevention programs, policing and rehabilitation. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has shown us that the average cost of incarcerating someone is about \$115,000 a year. The average cost of segregation is \$463,000 for a year.

Incarcerating people, or putting them in segregation, should never be done lightly in any event. Even for guilty persons, we should only incarcerate them to the degree that the cost of their incarceration would more effectively advance public safety than any other expenditure of the same funds. Clearly because of the costs, the system should have an interest in avoiding incarceration and segregation whenever effective and less costly options exist.

This analysis is not to penny-pinch for its own sake, but it is to recognize that there is an opportunity cost associated with any expenditure. Proactive policing and effective crime prevention is good for victims and public safety, so striking that right balance is indeed of critical importance.

Some will point out that we can never know for sure if people will reoffend, which is true. However, when the likelihood to reoffend is very low, perhaps resources would be better used for other kinds of interventions, like more policing, which are more likely to advance public safety than continued incarceration.

About a year ago, I had the opportunity to visit a prison in my riding and have some good dialogue with employees and inmates. A few points stuck with me from that visit. One is that there are a variety of programs available to people who are in prison and a variety of not-for-profit organizations, including many churches and other faith-based organizations, involved in connecting with and supporting inmates while in prison.

The process of transition from prison to life back outside of prison can be a real challenge. Prison life is structured and regulated in a way that life outside is not. There are far more services inside than outside. The process of transition back to normal life often involves economic challenges and pressures, as well as the temptation to fall back into old social groups and patterns of behaviour.

It seems to me that we need to look more at the area of transition and post-prison supports. How can we help people leverage new skills and experiences to find meaningful employment and develop a new peer group? How can we better partner with faith communities and other not-for-profits, recognizing that post-prison ministry is just as important as prison ministry?

● (1625)

Speaking of skills that help with transition, the prison in my riding offers inmates the potential opportunity to seek trade certification. Inmates who get a trade certificate almost never return to prison, according to the staff I spoke to.

That made me wonder. What if we built into our criminal justice a system a mechanism by which sentence lengths would be automatically adjusted if an inmate acquired a specific employment-related qualification? Inmates acquiring employment-related qualifications in areas of skill shortages in particular would help the economy. It would give employers a greater incentive to hire former inmates in cases where there would be a skill shortage. Therefore, perhaps there is an opportunity there for a win-win.

There should be positive incentives associated with rehabilitation and with making choices to turn one's life around. There also needs to be negative incentives associated with bad and disruptive behaviour that creates problems for the rehabilitation and for creating an environment in a prison setting that is conducive to rehabilitation. That brings us to the question of administrative segregation.

Bill C-83 would replace administrative segregation with something called, "structured intervention units". We know that one of the Liberals' favourite things to do is to change the names of things, be it the universal child care benefit to the Canada child benefit. The workers' tax deduction had its name changed. Many existing programs had their names changed and the process relabelled under the current government.

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Certainly the critics of administrative segregation do not see a meaningful or sufficient difference between the old and the new forms of segregation. However, there are some specific differences. Whether they are sufficient is a question for us to debate.

I will note the differences. The legislation would require that the person in the new Liberal rebranded form segregation to have a minimum of four hours per day out instead of two. It specifically mandates meaningful human contact.

What is frustrating for me is that the government does not seem to have a plan associated with it to actually link these objectives with the resources that are required. So often we see the government's desire to brand itself on something. The Liberals are eliminating administrative segregation. However, they are simply making an adjustment with respect to the name, but there are not sufficient resources associated with the commitments they have made to deal with the reality that having four hours instead of two is significantly more costly from a policing and administrative perspective. If they mandate it without having the resources in place to deliver on that commitment, they risk the inmates and the prison itself. They risk creating an environment of much less safety in the prison because they have a requirement for people to be out of a segregated environment when they may be very dangerous, yet they do not have the resources to ensure that is policed in an effective way.

It is interesting as well to have legislation that mandates meaningful human contact. It is interesting for the state to even be in the business of trying to define what is meaningful human contact and to mandate it. There are probably many people who are not in prison, who for various reasons with respect to life circumstances would like to have that much meaningful human contact and do not. The goal of rehabilitation should be to get people to a place and disposition where they are able to reconnect with and have meaningful connections with people in their lives. Although it is a laudable objective, I question what the legislation could mean and how the government would propose to operationalize this requirement of meaningful human contact.

I will close with this. In the area of criminal justice policy, there might actually have been an opportunity for some cross-party co-operation if the government had listened to the arguments we were making and understood the need for balance; that is a criminal justice policy that affirms human dignity, recognizing personal responsibility as well as the ability for people to change and recognizing the need to properly resource the proposals it is putting forward. Instead, we have an inadequate bill that serves to meet a branding exercise.

The Liberals want to say that they have done away with a particular aspect of prison life when they do not have a plan to resource it, they do not have a plan for public safety and they are not interested in the kind of meaningful, substantive reforms that people across the spectrum are looking for, the kinds of sentencing reforms on which we could potentially co-operate on. Again, we are not seeing those ideas proposed by the government.

• (1630)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is worth noting that the courts in both British Columbia and Ontario have struck down the administrative provisions for

segregation. If those laws take effect, which they are scheduled to do in the coming months, it would make segregation no longer an option. I find it extremely concerning that the Conservatives continue to support this approach.

The member talked about rehabilitation and how much the Conservatives were in favour of that. He even went on to talk about maximizing supports and incentives. That is interesting. If we look back at the last Conservative government and its legislation and policy, it did the exact opposite. The Conservatives removed things like prison farms, which were incredible at building social, valuable life skills. That was the testimony of many inmates who had been in and out of prison. After going through that program, they developed those skills and were able to become positive contributing members of society.

I am curious if the member could expand on that and share a little about these maximizing supports and incentives that the previous Conservative was able to bring aboard. If not, maybe he could suggest what some of those could be with his suggested policy.

• (1635)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, with all due respect to the member, his question betrays a real lack of understanding of what our role is as members of Parliament and what we are supposed to be doing. We are here to advance our own views about policy issues and to outline ideas and visions for moving us forward. That is exactly what I have done.

With respect to the member's criticisms, as well as those of other members of the government, about criminal justice policies that were pursued in the past, most of the policies around mandatory minimum sentences were supported and voted for by the Liberal caucus. It is very interesting to hear those members complain about some of the effects of that. They complain about money allocated to build new prisons and so forth, but then in every case, they voted for the sentencing bills around mandatory minimums that came forward. We unfortunately see a lot of hypocrisy from the government on this issue.

I want to comment on what the member said about administrative segregation. The courts have quite rightly criticized cases in which the administration of segregation was not effective. This does mean that it cannot be administered effectively and certainly it would be administered less effectively with a government mandating policies that it does not have a plan to resource.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague's opinion on the follow remarks by Senator Pate.

I will read a few excerpts.

Bill C-83 also maintains the status quo regarding a lack of effective external oversight of correctional decision making. Under the new legislation, all decision making regarding when and how long prisoners are to be segregated will be made by a CSC administrator without the review of any third party.

She adds:

This change represents another step away from Justice Louise Arbour's recommendation for judicial oversight of corrections following the Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women in Kingston.

Government Orders

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of that.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, my colleague is right to say that the government is not moving in a particularly dramatic way, that it wants to say it has eliminated administrative segregation but has rebranded it. The system is relatively similar except the Liberals are mandating a greater number of hours for which the resources are not sufficient to address that.

The member's proposal is one that I would want to study further before taking a definitive position on, but it is certainly an interesting idea for exploration. The principle of oversight to some degree makes sense. It is just a question of the logistics around its use in the particular way in which she has discussed it.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is good to be here this afternoon. It is unfortunate that we do not have a stronger bill with a little better content in it, but we will deal with what we have today. As usual, this is the kind of thing we have had to face with the government. It should be no surprise to us that it is in the chaos it is in, because we see a fairly consistent presentation that leads to bills that are this weak. I will talk about those weaknesses later.

The bill is basically a knee-jerk reaction to two Supreme Court decisions. The Liberals decided to play both sides of that game, so they are appealing those decisions at the same time as they are bringing forward whole new legislation. I think the public needs to understand that. Unfortunately, on this bill, they have missed the boat both on content and knowledge. We heard that from witnesses who came forward at committee. Witness after witness said that, first of all, they were not consulted, and second, the bill was not going in the right direction and needed to be reworked or thrown out, set aside or whatever.

One of the things the Liberals have done consistently since they have come to power is bring things forward and then actually look at them and decide whether they are worth bringing forward. Then they start to get people's opinions and they find out that they are on the wrong track. Then they start to backtrack and begin to amend their legislation. Once it comes back in here, they start forcing it through. We are here today on a bill with time allocation. The Liberals not only brought in time allocation at report stage but have already brought it in for third reading as well. We have seen this many times before, and we are seeing it here today. Fortunately, on some of these occasions, the Liberals have actually set bills aside and decided that they were not going to see them through. I guess electoral reform would be one of those that was obvious. Bill C-69 is another one that people across this country are begging the Liberals to set aside, because it would basically destroy the energy industry in Canada if they brought it through. Sometimes they can listen, but usually they find it very difficult to do that.

It is ironic that we have time allocation today, because had we had petitions today, I wanted to bring one forward. It is an electronic petition, E-1886. I found it fascinating that over 10,000 people signed this petition. It is an electronic petition from people across Canada, and it has to do with this issue.

This morning I asked a question of the public safety minister. He has been here for a long time. He was here before I was. One of the

things he was part of before I came here was an attack on and actually the jailing of western Canadian farmers. These were farmers who had said that they would like to sell their own grain. One of them had donated one bushel of grain to a 4-H club in Montana. The public safety minister was one of those ministers who led the charge against those farmers. By the time they were done, they had five departments of the government working against individual Canadians. The CRA was involved. Justice was involved. Immigration was involved. The RCMP was firmly involved. Members can read stories of what happened in a couple of books by Don Baron. He writes about raids on people's farms in the middle of the night and their trying to confiscate their equipment, and those kinds of things. The public safety minister was then the agriculture minister. I asked him why it seems that every time we turn around, he is going after regular law-abiding Canadians.

We see this again with the initiative coming from the other side on handguns, which have been very restricted since the 1930s. People in Canada use them for sport. Many people across Canada have gone through the process to be licenced. This government seems bound and determined to try to make some sort of criminals out of handgun owners across this country. Again, my question to him was why he continued to come after law-abiding citizens, especially when on the other side, they are not all that interested, it seems, in actually protecting people from criminals.

That brings me back to my petition. Everyone is familiar with the case of Terri-Lynne McClintic, who was convicted of first degree murder in the horrific abduction, rape and murder of eight-year-old Tori Stafford. She was moved from a secure facility to a healing lodge without fences, where the government confirmed the presence of children. She is not eligible for parole until 2031. The Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, which happens to be in my riding, lacks the necessary security measures to ensure the safety of local citizens in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan and surrounding areas.

● (1640)

Over 10,000 people across Canada called on the Government of Canada to exercise its moral and political authority to ensure that this decision was reversed and could not be allowed to happen again in other situations. We all know that it took the government weeks before it would acknowledge that there was a problem with this transfer, and in the end, it semi-reversed that transfer.

The interesting thing is that some of the same things are in Bill C-83. Right at the beginning, subclause 2(1) says, "the Service uses the least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of society, staff members and offenders". There is no sense of some sort of disciplinary activity taking place in our prisons. The government says it has to find the least restrictive and most friendly way to treat people being held in our prisons right now.

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I could go through many of the provisions of this bill. It talks about prisoners receiving the most effective programs, but when the minister was asked if there was a costing for this, he said that the government had not done costing on the bill. We can talk all day long about effective programs and health care, which this bill does, but if it was not costed before it was brought forward, how would the government even know what it would be expected to provide?

The bill talks about the criteria for the selection of the penitentiary. It says that it must be the “least restrictive environment” for the person. Correctional Service Canada has to deliberately run around and try to find the least restrictive place to put people. Many of these people are very dangerous individuals. Some of these people are actually bad people. I heard some heckling from the other side basically implying that they are not and that they can all be reformed if we treat them well, and if we ask for their opinions, they will give us good, solid opinions, we will all get along and we can hold hands and sing songs. The reality is that there are some people in these prisons who are very bad people and do not deserve to be running around as they choose.

One of the strange changes in this bill would allow the commissioner to designate a penitentiary or any section of a penitentiary as any level of security he or she chooses. That is very strange. The Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge is a minimum security prison on the edge of the Cypress Hills area. It is a beautiful location right at the edge of the trees. There are no fences around it. There is a series of cottages. The women right now spend time in the cottages. They have programming in the main lodge. Does that mean that the commissioner can designate one of those cottages a maximum security unit without changing the security level of the facilities or anything else and just say it is now a maximum-level unit, and someone can be put there who is supposed to be in a maximum security prison? All of us would put our heads in our hands and say that this is a crazy idea.

Within prisons there are some people who do not want to be in the general population. They are okay with being segregated. There are a number of reasons that might happen. One is that they may get hurt or injured themselves. The second is that they may hurt or injure someone else. They do not want to be put back into the general population of the prison. This bill basically says that the department has to continually work to do everything it can to put them back into general population.

A common theme throughout Bill C-83 and legislation on crime the Liberals keep bringing forward is that they want to try to make life easier for the most difficult prisoners. They should be looking at public safety. They should look at the people who work in the prisons. Why do Liberals not ever seem to focus on them instead of trying to find a way to hug a thug. They seem to really enjoy doing that.

This bill contains a lot of rhetoric and very few specifics. We were told that it was not costed. Once again, it is a demonstration of how soft the Liberals are on crime and how willing they are to close their eyes to reality. This is a series of promises that again will not be kept. This bill should be set aside. It is unfortunate that the government has moved time allocation for the 60th or 70th time to force this bill through.

● (1645)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard members of the opposition say that this is a branding exercise, that there are not dramatic changes and that it is just a lot of rhetoric. I have to say that having studied this bill, I could not be more proud of it. I actually believe, firmly in my heart, that years from now, not only federal institutions but provincial institutions and institutions around the world will be looking at Canada for the way we have ended segregation.

When the minister appeared at committee, he was asked if it had been costed. That was prior to the fall economic statement, when \$448 million was allocated to implement the revised SIUs.

I am wondering if any of the members have actually read the bill to see that there is oversight in it. It is actually my amendment. If this is such a terrible plan to end administrative segregation in prisons, what would you propose we do?

● (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I would remind the member to address the questions to the Chair.

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, we understand that you would certainly have the capacity to answer that question, if you chose to.

Once again, the Liberals are hiding, as my colleague pointed out a little earlier, by changing the name of something and making it pretty much exactly the same thing. The Liberals are going to change what used to be solitary confinement to structured intervention units. If there is one thing the government is good at, it is finding acronyms and these kinds of things so that it can disguise what is actually going on.

The reality is that it is not going to change things a lot. The other reality is that the government is actually appealing the decisions made by the court. Apparently, if it wins, the Liberals will go back to the other system anyhow.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I do not believe the member and I would see eye to eye on many things on the issue of public safety and corrections. One thing the member mentioned in his speech on which we could agree is that the changes the government is proposing to solitary confinement are really cosmetic, and they did not get the support of witnesses who came to the committee.

I also want to remind the hon. member that many of the issues we are facing around safety in corrections, for both staff and inmates, have come from years of underfunding and from over-incarcerating people, particularly indigenous people from our province of Saskatchewan.

I have two questions for my hon. colleague. First, does he support the Supreme Court ruling that solitary confinement, or the euphemistic term, “administrative segregation”, is unconstitutional? Does the member agree with that?

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Second, does the member agree with the evidence that shows that for those people who have mental health issues, and that group of people in prisons in extremely large, solitary confinement, or administrative segregation, actually exacerbates people's mental health symptoms and causes more harm than good?

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, obviously there are a host of issues involved in that question, but I appreciate my colleague's question.

The bill talks about programming. It talks about setting up programs for every single prisoner who is in prison. I think we are probably going to agree that there is a lot of rhetoric in here the Liberals never have any intention of fulfilling. They lay these things out. They make it look like there is going to be some great change, but they are not actually going to see this through.

Again, I think this is virtue signalling. The Liberals are basically replacing the names of things, and we are basically going to end up with the same structures and the same prisons we had before. Those same issues my colleague talks about will probably be left unanswered and will not be dealt with.

[*Translation*]

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 Elmwood—Transcona, Public Services and Procurement; the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Saskatoon West, Housing.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek.

[*English*]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to stand and add my voice in support of Bill C-83, a piece of legislation that would make a number of changes to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. I am pleased to lend my support, as my colleagues have also done.

Bill C-83 proposes a number of important things. It creates the concept of patient advocates, as recommended by the inquest into the tragic death of Ashley Smith. Many of us in the House are very aware of the inquest and what happened to Ms. Smith, and the difficulties. We are very hopeful that Bill C-83 is going to help remedy some of those problems and prevent that from happening to some other young person.

The bill is meant to support inmates who need medical care, and ensure that they and their families can understand and exercise their rights. It would enshrine in law the principle that health care professionals working in the corrections system are autonomous and make decisions based on their medical judgment, without undue influence from correctional authorities.

It would enshrine in law the requirement that systemic and background factors be considered in all decisions involving indigenous people in custody, and it would expand the section of the law requiring the correctional service to be guided by respect for the diversity of the inmate population.

It would allow victims who attend parole hearings to access audio recordings of the proceedings.

It would create the legislative authority necessary for the Correctional Service of Canada to use body scanners to interdict drugs and other contraband, something that has been a problem for many years. There are people who have had to endure strip searches and so on. Having the body scanners would make it better for both the correctional service folks as well as for inmates. This technology is both less invasive than methods such as strip searches and less prone to false positives than the ion scanners CSC currently relies on.

It would also replace the current system of administrative segregation with structured intervention units, or SIUs, as they are referred to. This new system would ensure that when inmates need to be separated from the rest of the prison population for safety reasons, they would retain access to rehabilitative programming, mental health care and other interventions, something that was not happening before.

The bill deals with serious and challenging issues, and it is to be expected that Canadians and members of Parliament will have differences of opinion about them. So far, however, the Conservative contributions to this debate have been incredibly disappointing. At times, the Conservatives have blatantly contradicted themselves. For instance, in his speech, the member for Yellowhead complained that the changes made by the bill to administrative segregation are insignificant and superficial. However, in the very same speech, the very same member said that those very same changes would endanger inmates and staff. Which is it? Do the Conservatives think the bill is insignificant, or do they think it is catastrophic? It cannot be both.

At other times, the Conservatives have simply chosen to ignore the facts. They have been complaining over and over again that the government has not allocated resources to implement the bill, when they know that is not the case. On page 103 of the fall economic statement, issued by the finance minister last November, there is \$448 million allocated to support amendments to transform federal corrections, including the introduction of a new correctional interventions model to eliminate segregation.

Also in November, the government sent the public safety committee a written response that went into more detail about the funding.

● (1655)

That response says that if Bill C-83 is adopted, the government will invest \$297 million over six years and \$71 million ongoing to implement the structured intervention units. The funding will be dedicated to providing focused interventions, programs and social supports and will include access to resources such as program officers, aboriginal liaison officers, elders, chaplains and others. That is in a document that all members of the public safety committee have had for over three months.

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The document goes on to say that the remaining amount from the fall economic statement, \$150.3 million over six years and \$74.3 million ongoing, is for mental health care. That includes assessment and early diagnosis of inmates at intake and throughout incarceration, enhancements to primary and acute mental health care, and support for patient advocacy and 24/7 health care at designated institutions.

Again, this is all from a document that the Conservatives also have had since the fall, so when they complain about a lack of resources, they are either being disingenuous or they just have not had time to read the report.

The Conservatives' contributions to this debate have also been characterized by an unfortunate amount of self-righteousness. They position themselves as champions of victims, but it was legislation passed by the Harper government in 2015 that prohibited victims who attend a parole hearing from accessing an audio recording of that same hearing. Their bill said that victims who want recordings have to stay away from the hearing itself.

Parole hearings are often difficult experiences for many victims of crime, full of emotion, and the law should not expect them to retain every word of the proceedings at a time when they are immensely frightened and nervous and in an unfamiliar environment. The legislation before us today would finally let all victims access those recordings, whether they attend in person or not.

The Conservatives also position themselves as champions of correctional employees. Let me remind the House what the national president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers said in 2014. Kevin Grabowsky was head of the union at that time, and he said, "We have to actively work to rid the Conservatives from power." He said the Harper government was endangering correctional officers with changes to the labour code, cuts to rehabilitative programming and policies that resulted in overcrowding in federal prisons.

The main question raised at committee by both correctional officers and the Union of Safety and Justice Employees, which represents other CSC staff such as parole officers, was whether Bill C-83 would be accompanied by sufficient resources to implement it safely and effectively. As I have already made clear, the answer to that is a resounding yes.

Finally, the Conservatives' interventions in this debate have been reminiscent of the very worst of the Harper approach to the legislative process. They have been actually attacking the government for listening to stakeholder feedback and accepting some of those amendments. Under the Harper government, that kind of openness was unheard of, but I am proud to support a government that lets legislators legislate.

I thank all members who have engaged in a serious study of the bill and proposed thoughtful amendments, which is exactly what Canadians sent all of us here to do.

We have before us legislation that would make correctional institutions more effective and humane, accompanied by the resources needed to implement it safely. It is important that we move forward and pass the bill at this time.

● (1700)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the things my colleague talked about in her speech was the introduction of full body scanners. While it might seem hard to believe, there are some elements of this legislation that we do support, and that is one of them.

The irony of it is that if full body scanners are used on all visitors who enter our prison system, why in the world would the Liberals continue to implement their prisoner needle exchange program? If everyone is body scanned, there is no need to have this prisoner needle exchange program.

I am wondering if my colleague, even with the introduction of full body scanners, would continue to support the use of the prisoner needle exchange program, on which our front-line officers, whom she quoted from five years ago, are today saying there has been no consultation. All of us know that there is such a thing as buyer's remorse, and this gentleman is one of them. Many others have approached me about the promises that the Liberal government made and has now backtracked on.

Does my colleague still support the introduction of the prisoner needle exchange program?

● (1705)

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, we are trying to solve the many problems that our jails are trying to cope with. We know of HIV and a number of other diseases and infections that continue to be spread. We need to try to offer ways and means for inmates to be treated for drug addiction. There is no sense keeping our head in the sand and not recognizing that it is a serious problem. Many of the people currently in jail and carrying out some of the horrendous crimes we all know about are very serious drug addicts. The safe needle exchange, yes, is an issue, but at the same time, it would provide opportunity for rehabilitation, improve safety overall and reduce the amount of disease as a result of not having safe needles.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member spoke about the investments being made to implement these SIUs and rightly noted that members of the opposition seem not to have read the reports that the public safety committee received. The investment of \$448 million is significant, part of it going toward infrastructure and a large portion going toward mental health. When I met with the president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers and the president of the Union of Safety and Justice Employees, both indicated that these investments are needed in order to implement this legislation. The previous government made significant cuts to corrections, and we are barely starting to catch up to what was cut.

I am wondering if the member could speak to the importance of this \$448 million to implement the legislation we have before us today.

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Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on the work that she has done, along with all colleagues on the public safety committee, in attempting to deal with these difficult issues. We all want our country to be safer. We do not want our communities exposed to some of the people out there, unfortunately, and a lot of it boils down to mental health issues.

Colleagues on the opposite side have indicated their concern for whether the resources were going to be put there. It is one thing to bring in legislation, but we need to back it up with the funds required. The fact is that this funding has already been committed, and the dollars are going to be there.

I am hoping that with all colleagues in the House, we will create a better environment to deal with mental health issues. Sooner or later people leave prison. They do not stay there forever, and if we do not give them the help they need to cure their particular drug addiction or help them with their mental health issues, when they leave they will carry all that negativity into society, and that is not going to help.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is great to rise this afternoon to speak on Bill C-83, an act that amends the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another act, transforming administrative segregation.

The legislation would do a number of important things, such as creating patient advocates to help ensure inmates get the medical care they need, giving victims of crime enhanced access to recordings of parole hearings and enshrining in law the requirement that Correctional Service Canada considers systemic and background factors when making decisions affecting indigenous people in custody.

Of course, the main thing it would do is replace the current system of administrative segregation with structured intervention units, SIUs, for inmates who need to be separated from the rest of the institution for safety reasons, where they would have access to rehabilitative programs, mental health care and other interventions that are generally not available in segregation, which is an improvement. Importantly, inmates in SIUs would be entitled to a minimum of four hours a day out of their cells and at least two hours a day of meaningful human interaction with staff, visitors, volunteers, elders, chaplains or other inmates with whom they are compatible and can interact safely.

One of the main questions that was asked in the early days of committee study was whether the bill would be backed up with the funding needed to implement it safely and effectively. The answer is yes. The fall economic statement included a \$448-million fund to implement the legislation. It includes about \$300 million for staffing and other resources for the SIUs as well as \$150 million for mental health care both in the SIUs and throughout the corrections system. These investments build on nearly \$80 million for mental health care in corrections in the last two budgets. In short, the Correctional Service would have the resources it needs to turn the intention of the legislation into a practical reality.

However, to make sure that these resources are put to good use and that the new structured intervention units really do work as planned, the public safety committee made several amendments to Bill C-83. Yes, the committee system does work and our government

committed to that when we were first elected. None of these amendments change the nature of the bill, but they add clarity to the way the new system will work.

For instance, Bill C-83 specifies that an inmate's time out of the cell will have to be offered between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. Interactions would generally be expected to happen face to face rather than through a door or meal slot. The clause that would allow hours out of cell not to be offered in exceptional circumstances now includes a list of examples, such as fires or natural disasters, to be clear that the circumstances must be truly exceptional. Also, if a warden disagrees with a medical recommendation to remove an inmate from an SIU, the matter will be elevated to a senior panel external to the institution.

However, those are the important additions that would strengthen the new system, and now at report stage, the member for Oakville North—Burlington has proposed an additional amendment that would add independent external review of SIU placements, which is something that was called for by several witnesses. The public safety minister told the committee last fall that he was open to the idea. The government has now confirmed that it will support the proposal.

Again, the role of committees is near and dear to our democracy, and it is again in Bill C-83 that we see committees doing the good work that Canadians expect them to do and that their members do with pride.

External decision-makers would get involved in three scenarios: if an inmate in an SIU has, for whatever reason, not received the minimum hours out of his or her cell or minimum hours of meaningful human contact for five days in a row or 15 out of 30; if the senior panel reviewing a medical recommendation decides to keep the inmate in the SIU; and on the 90th day of placement in SIU, and every 60 days thereafter, for as long as the inmate is there.

• (1710)

In the first scenario, when an inmate has not been getting his or her time out of cell, the external independent decision-maker will consider whether the Correctional Service has taken all reasonable steps to provide the inmate with opportunities for hours out and encourage inmates to avail themselves of those opportunities. If they determine that not to be the case, they can make recommendations to the service, and if, after a week, the independent decision-maker is still not satisfied, they can order the inmate removed from the SIU. The decision-maker's ruling will be appealable to the Federal Court, both by the inmate and the Correctional Service.

Government Orders

In the other scenarios, a disagreement about a medical recommendation and regular reviews beginning on the 90th day, the independent decision-maker will consider whether having the inmate in the general population poses a security threat or would interfere with an ongoing investigation. It will take into account the inmate's correctional plan, the appropriateness of the inmate's security classification and confinement in the penitentiary, and any other factor it deems relevant.

Bill C-83 provides extensive flexibilities to the authorities to do their jobs. In other words, inmates who currently need to be separated from the rest of the institution for security reasons spend 22 hours a day in their cells, with very little in the way of rehabilitative interventions and no external oversight. Under Bill C-83, those inmates will have twice as much time out of their cells, with a full suite of rehabilitative interventions, including mental health care, and there will be binding external oversight that could kick in after as few as five days or even sooner in the event of a health care professional's recommendation.

This is a major step forward and that cannot be over-emphasized. Bill C-83 updates issues with regard to our penitentiaries and commits the appropriate funds to do so. I am proud of the legislation. I do not sit on the committee reviewing and bringing the bill forward, but it is great to see the committee doing its work and also incorporating amendments.

Bill C-83 will also enhance rehabilitation while continuing to meet the security imperatives that must always be top of mind when we are dealing with corrections. In fact, we cannot really separate rehabilitation from security. Better, more effective rehabilitation results in better security, both while the inmates are incarcerated and, as importantly, once they have been released.

That is why I support Bill C-83, and I hope that the bill will be adopted and enacted as soon as possible by this Parliament.

● (1715)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the bill would end administrative segregation, something that all of us who read the coroner's inquest into Ashley Smith and the horrible things that happened to that young lady, resulting in her dying by suicide, would agree with.

I am wondering if the hon. member could speak to the importance of ending the practice of administrative segregation and ensuring we are putting something in place that will put the safety of those who work in corrections, which is always paramount to the government and to all of us, while acknowledging that we need to fix the system that failed so miserably for someone like Ashley Smith.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, as many parliamentarians and many Canadians would know, we all watched the images of what Ashley Smith endured on CBC and a number of news programs. We want to ensure that does not happen to any other Canadian.

We do know our penitentiaries serve the role in our society of making sure that people are held to account for their actions and are held responsible. Through the bill, we would ensure that individuals who are in penitentiaries do their time, which is one of the aspects we obviously believe in as a government, while receiving proper and

humane treatment as individuals. That is something I personally believe in as a Canadian and as a person. We must prevent any other instances, such as what happened to this young girl, from occurring.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am appalled to hear the Liberals say that Bill C-83 will prevent suicides, when we know that many experts oppose administrative segregation. The bill proposes up to 20 hours a day of segregation for an indefinite period of time.

Two courts, one in Ontario and another in B.C., ruled that indefinite administrative segregation is unconstitutional. Furthermore, there is no independent oversight to assess the restrictions on freedom. Administrative segregation restricts freedom.

It has been proven that more than 48 hours in administrative isolation can cause permanent mental health effects and lead to self-harm, depression, suicide, panic attacks and hypersensitivity to external stimuli. The fact that administrative segregation is still an option is disastrous. The Liberals are just replicating what existed before and claiming to improve the situation.

The Liberals say that this could prevent suicides. However, the new measures aggravate mental health problems related to administrative segregation. In my view, it makes no sense to go down this path.

Today, the government is muzzling MPs. We should be moving amendments to improve the bill. The government rejected virtually all of the NDP and Conservative Party amendments aimed at improving the bill. That is not very professional, and it is very hypocritical. It harms inmates whose mental health problems will be aggravated and who will eventually be released and reintegrated into society.

● (1720)

[*English*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. colleague from Quebec for her question. We both attended the new year celebrations in Mississauga for the Vietnamese community. It was great to see her there and to have her in the GTA.

With respect to the bill, an amendment was adopted at report stage to add a mechanism for independent oversight. Also, we must consider the fact that we have added a slew of services for individuals who are held in penitentiaries in SIUs or under confinement, including mental health care. For the first time, mental health will be a priority for these individuals and they will be receiving approximately four hours a day outside of their cells.

The improvements and amendments that have been adopted in the bill and the funding framework that is allotted to the bill in the budget are two things we can be proud of. We can say it demonstrates to Canadians that we are advocating for and ensuring their safety. However, we are also ensuring that people are treated humanely when they are sent to penitentiaries and that the case we spoke about earlier does not repeat itself.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am rising today to speak in support of Bill C-83.

Government Orders

The role of our corrections system is to keep Canadians safe by managing people who have received criminal sentences of two years or more. In most cases, that involves preparing them for safe and successful reintegration into our communities, which obviously is a very difficult task.

Some of the people in federal custody have done terrible, violent things. Most inmates have some combination of mental illness, a history of physical or sexual abuse, drug or alcohol addiction and a lack of economic or educational opportunity. Getting them to where they can return to a society and live safe, productive, law-abiding lives involves interventions to deal with all of those factors. This includes mental health care, education, skills training, substance abuse treatment, rehabilitative programs and the guidance of elders and chaplains.

However, that work can only happen in a safe environment. When inmates pose a security risk, they may have to be temporarily separated from the rest of the institution.

On that point, there is agreement from the correctional investigator, the John Howard Society, correctional employees and even former inmates that this needs to be done. The problem is that our existing system for doing that, administrative segregation, separates inmates not only from the rest of the prison population, but also from the interventions that could address the factors that caused them to be a security risk in the first place. Bill C-83 would address this problem.

The bill maintains the ability for inmates who pose a risk to be separated when necessary, but it sets out conditions of confinement and intervention that are a major improvement over what is currently in use. In the structured intervention units, or SIUs, created by Bill C-83, inmates would receive a daily opportunity of at least four hours to be out of the cell and at least two hours of meaningful interaction with other people, such as program staff, visitors, volunteers and other compatible inmates.

On that last point, some participants in this debate have conjured the spectre of correctional staff just throwing incompatible inmates, such as members of rival gangs, together in the yard and keeping their fingers crossed. Of course, that will not happen, and would not happen, with the professional staff we have at Correctional Service Canada.

We are talking about a situation where out of maybe seven or eight inmates in the SIU, two of them get along and might be allowed to have lunch together. To allow for meals or yard time to happen in small groups or for rehabilitative programs to be provided one-on-one or in small groups, the corrections services will need new resources, including hiring new staff and making adjustments to infrastructure. That is why the fall economic statement included \$448 million over six years for the implementation of the bill, \$300 million going toward staff and infrastructure.

As set out in the breakdown the government provided to the public safety committee in November, that includes this funding as well as \$150 million toward mental health care. These resources will allow the corrections services to meet the ambitious new standards set by Bill C-83, improving the quality and accessibility of mental health care and rehabilitative interventions.

The whole point is to address the issues that led to a person being separated from the mainstream inmate population in the first place, so he or she can safely reintegrate in the community within the institution and eventually the community outside it. I hope that is an objective we all share. Indeed, most of the witnesses at committee, who made critiques of the bill, did not take issue with this objective. They simply wanted greater assurance that the objective would be met. Since their testimony was heard, amendments have been made in an effort to provide that assurance.

• (1725)

In fact, amendments have been accepted from all parties as we have gone through this legislation, which is one of the main purposes of committees and a purpose that our government respects.

Witnesses worried that the opportunity for time out of the cell would be provided at unreasonable hours, like in the middle of the night. Therefore, the bill has been amended to specify that it must occur between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m.

Witnesses also worried that the clause that time out of cell not be provided in exceptional circumstances might be too broad. Therefore, the bill has been amended to provide specific examples of the kinds of exceptional circumstances that we are talking about, like fires and natural disasters.

Although the bill would allow for health care providers to recommend that an inmate be removed from the SIU for medical reasons, witnesses worried that wardens might not take these recommendations seriously. The bill has been amended so that any disagreement between the health care provider and the warden could be elevated to a senior committee external to the institution.

Witnesses also expressed the view that independent, external oversight would be required to ensure that SIUs would be used appropriately and as a last resort. Therefore, the member for Oakville North—Burlington proposed an amendment to create an independent oversight mechanism, and the government announced its support.

Earlier this week, these amendments were read into the record at length and are available for all Canadians to see the great work that was done by the member for Oakville North—Burlington. In other words, this was a strong bill when it was first introduced, and the parliamentary process has been informed by witness testimony and public debate, and that has made it even stronger.

I thank all the members of the House who have made thoughtful, informed, constructive contributions throughout the process thus far. I thank the government for being receptive to feedback and open to amendments. It is worth noting that this is not something that could often be said about the previous government.

The provisions in the bill, together with the resources allocated by the government, will make our correctional system more effective at its core mandate, which is protecting Canadians through the effective rehabilitation and safe reintegration of people who have broken the law. It deals with people as people. It helps them to progress through difficult situations to get back into society and be productive members.

Government Orders

As the public safety minister wrote last summer in the first-ever public mandate letter for a commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada, the public is best protected by safe, successful rehabilitation. Bill C-83 would help achieve that goal. I encourage all hon. members in the House to give their support.

• (1730)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of discussion in this place today, in particular criticism coming from the other side of the House, with respect to the process by which this legislation has gone through the House and, by design or by default, into the committee. This member took great extent to talk about it exactly and he highlighted how that committee structure worked so well, how concerns were being brought forward and the bill was amended at that time to reflect those concerns.

Could the member, given what he has contributed to this debate, comment on how this legislation made its way through the legislative process and whether it was given the due consideration it required along the course of that process.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, I had to check whether I could speak at this stage because I had spoken at other stages. I have had the opportunity to contribute to the debate. The debate has moved as the committee study went through. The bill came back and we had some amendments this week that we also had the opportunity to discuss. It is a highlight of this Parliament that we do have the opportunity to participate.

As a member, I went to the Grand Valley Institution for Women so I could be further aware of what went on inside the walls currently. Back in the early 1980s, I went to the Stony Mountain Institution, looking at what was going on there. There were some concerns about how inmates were getting along. Things have changed a lot over the years. As members, we can also visit institutions and then participate in the debate. That is a great showcase of how our democracy works.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things we have repeated many times today, and yet we do not have adequate answers to, is the fact that virtually every group of witnesses that came to committee, other than the government officials themselves, had huge criticisms of the bill, primarily around the issue of lack of consultation. In spite of the fact that in the 2015 campaign, we heard at all candidates debates how this government would be open and transparent and would consult with Canadians, we have a bill that would put the very safety of our front-line officers at risk and they have not been consulted.

The CSC ombudsman himself indicated a lack of consultation. Not only was there a lack of consultation, but there is a big concern that the legislative process the bill is at right now could leave far too many issues to be dealt with through the regulatory process. That leads into nothing but trouble.

I wonder if my colleague could explain why there was such a lack of consultation and why this big gap is going to leave so much of the actual implementation of the bill to the regulatory process, where it may not in fact have the legislative approval it requires.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the way is my neighbour just to the west of Guelph. We share an institution that we both have visited on many occasions. One of the

concerns I heard when I was at the institution was that the previous government had cut funding and cut the positions of the officers, who he is saying need to have protection. One of the protections comes through budgets. Instead of cutting \$300 million from the budget between 2012 and 2015, we are now adding \$300 million, plus \$150 million for mental health care.

Instead of putting in mandatory minimum sentences, which put two prisoners into each cell and overcrowded our prisons, we have eliminated the mandatory minimum sentences so the process of our whole judicial process is not putting undue burden on the people working within it. We are giving them funding and helping improve the process so they are able to do the professional job we rely on them to do every day.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House and participate in today's debate on Bill C-83, a transformative piece of legislation for our correctional system. Its ultimate goal is to promote safety, both inside and outside our federal institutions, and it prioritizes rehabilitation as an indispensable part of achieving that goal.

The core innovation in Bill C-83 is the proposed introduction of structured intervention units, or SIUs. These SIUs would address a reality in any prison, which is that some inmates are, at certain times, simply too dangerous or disruptive to be safely housed in the mainstream inmate population. The current practice is to place those offenders in administrative segregation.

Segregated inmates in federal institutions can be in their cells for as many as 22 hours a day, and their interactions with other inmates are highly limited. Bill C-83 offers a more effective way forward for everyone involved. Safety will always be priority number one, but prisons are safer places to live and work when inmates receive the programming, mental health care and other interventions they need. Inmates who receive these interventions are more likely to reintegrate safely into the community when their sentences are over.

The solution the government is proposing in Bill C-83 is to eliminate segregation and to replace it with SIUs. These units will be secure and separate from the mainstream inmate population so that the safety imperative will be met. However, they will be designed to ensure that the inmates who are placed there receive the interventions, programming and treatment that they require.

Inmates in SIUs will be given the opportunity to leave their cells for at least four hours a day, as opposed to two hours under the current system. It is worth noting that currently, those two hours are set out in policy and not in legislation. Bill C-83 will give the four-hour minimum the full force of law. Inmates in SIUs will also have the opportunity for at least two hours of meaningful human contact. During that time, they could interact with people such as correctional staff, other compatible inmates, visitors, chaplains or elders.

Government Orders

The goal of these reforms is for inmates in an SIU to be in a position to reintegrate into the mainstream inmate population as soon as possible.

Bill C-83 has undergone rigorous analysis at every stage of the parliamentary process to date. Members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security went over the bill with a fine-tooth comb.

Based on testimony from a wide range of stakeholders, a number of useful amendments were adopted at the end of the committee's study period. Bill C-83 was a solid and worthwhile bill from day one. It is now even better and stronger for having gone through vigorous debate and a robust review process.

It is worth noting that the bill that has been reported back to us reflects amendments from all parties that proposed them. I wholeheartedly reject the idea we have heard during this debate that somehow the fact that the bill has been amended in response to public and parliamentary feedback is a bad thing. I am proud to support a government that welcomes informed, constructive feedback and that respects the role of members of Parliament from all parties in the legislative process.

Most of the amendments made to Bill C-83 are about ensuring that the new SIUs will function as intended.

• (1735)

For example, some witnesses were worried that the opportunity for time out of the cell would be provided in the middle of the night, when inmates were unlikely to take advantage of it. The member for Montarville therefore added the requirement that it happen between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m.

Other witnesses wondered whether the mandatory interactions with others might happen through a door or a meal slot. To address that concern, the member for Toronto—Danforth, whom I commend, added a provision requiring that every reasonable effort be made to ensure that interactions are face to face, with a record kept of any and all exceptions.

To address concerns that the Correctional Service of Canada might make excessive use of the clause allowing for time out of the cell not to be provided in exceptional circumstances, the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore added a list of specific examples, such as fires or natural disasters, to clarify how this clause should be interpreted.

Amendments from the member for Toronto—Danforth at committee and from the member for Oakville North—Burlington at report stage will enhance the review process so that each SIU placement is subject to robust oversight, both internally and externally.

All of this will help ensure that the new SIUs operate as intended. Amendments have also been accepted from the members for Brampton North, Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, Beloeil—Chambly and Saanich—Gulf Islands. I thank them for their contributions.

We all want safer institutions and safer communities, and we all want Canadians to feel safe.

Successful rehabilitation and safe reintegration of people in federal custody are key to achieving our shared objective of enhanced public safety. By allowing inmates who must be separated from the general prison population to receive more time out of their cell and more mental health care and rehabilitative interventions, Bill C-83 represents a major step in the right direction.

Again, I would like to thank all of my hon. colleagues for their contributions throughout the legislative process so far, and I urge them to join me in enthusiastically supporting the bill.

• (1740)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many experts have spoken out against this bill.

As the member said, we are talking about structured intervention units, which is just another way of saying “administrative segregation”. The member said this bill reduces the amount of time in administrative segregation from 22 or 23 hours to 20 hours. Wow, what an improvement.

Has the member ever tried locking herself in a room for 20 hours a day, for several days in a row, to see what it does to her body? As I have been saying all afternoon, it has been proven that permanent effects on mental health begin to emerge after 48 hours. These are permanent effects that continue to linger afterwards. These individuals have very little time to access programming, only four hours, in fact.

As the B.C. Supreme Court and the Ontario Superior Court of Justice have ruled, indefinite administrative segregation is unconstitutional. The provisions set out in the bill allow for an indefinite period of time, which could be 90 days or 150 days. No one knows.

On top of that, there is no independent oversight. The correctional investigator of Canada also criticized the fact that there are no procedural safeguards to prevent misuse. He foresees many possible cases of misuse and predicts that more and more inmates could be segregated in SIUs. The member is so proud of SIUs, but I think they are very cruel.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question and comments.

The reality is that the inmates in question, because we are not talking about all inmates here, are too dangerous or disruptive to be safely housed in the mainstream prison population. Right now, they can leave their cells for two hours a day. Once the bill is passed, they will be entitled to spend four hours outside their cell, and that will be enshrined in law. What is more, they will have to have human contact, be it with correctional officers, health care professionals or chaplains, to create ties and move forward.

We are also going to ensure that they have better access to mental health care, because that is often necessary. The previous government cut \$800 million in funding, which definitely had a negative impact on our correctional facilities. We need to fix that.

Bill C-83 will promote inmate rehabilitation and ensure that all Canadians feel safe. That is a critical objective.

• (1745)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 5:45 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.

[English]

The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2, 4 to 8, 11, 18 to 21, and 23 to 27.

A negative vote on Motion No. 1 necessitates the question being put on Motions Nos. 9 and 17.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Call in the members.

• (1825)

[Translation]

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 998)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Alleslev
Allison	Anderson
Arnold	Ashton
Aubin	Barlow
Barrett	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Block	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Cannings	Caron
Carrie	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Cullen
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeshen
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseau
Duvall	Egliniski
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Fast
Finley	Fortin
Gallant	Garrison

Généreux
 Hardcastle
 Hoback
 Jeneroux
 Jolibois
 Kent
 Kmiec
 Kwan
 Laverdière
 Liepert
 Lobb
 MacGregor
 Maguire
 Masse (Windsor West)
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
 Nantel
 Nicholson
 O'Toole
 Pauzé
 Poilievre
 Ramsey
 Rayes
 Rempel
 Saroya
 Schmale
 Shipley
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Trost
 Van Kesteren
 Warawa
 Waugh
 Weir
 Yurdiga

Government Orders

Genuis
 Harder
 Hughes
 Johns
 Kelly
 Kitchen
 Kusie
 Lake
 Leitch
 Lloyd
 Lukiwski
 MacKenzie
 Martel
 Mathysen
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Motz
 Nater
 Nuttall
 Paul-Hus
 Plamondon
 Quach
 Rankin
 Reid
 Sansoucy
 Scheer
 Shields
 Sorenson
 Ste-Marie
 Stubbs
 Tilson
 Trudel
 Wagantall
 Warkentin
 Webber
 Wong
 Zimmer — 122

NAYS

Members

Aldag
 Amos
 Arseneault
 Ayoub
 Bagnell
 Baylis
 Bibeau
 Blair
 Bossio
 Breton
 Chagger
 Cormier
 Dabrusin
 DeCoursey
 Drouin
 Duclos
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Fergus
 Fimmigan
 Fonseca
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Garneau
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Graham
 Hardie
 Hehr
 Holland
 Hussen
 Iacono
 Jordan
 Khalid
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Lightbound
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)

Alghabra
 Anandasangaree
 Arya
 Badawey
 Bains
 Bennett
 Bittle
 Boissonnault
 Bratina
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Champagne
 Cuzner
 Damoff
 Dhaliwal
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Dzerowicz
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Fillmore
 Fisher
 Fortier
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Fuhr
 Gerretsen
 Goodale
 Hajdu
 Hébert
 Hogg
 Housefather
 Hutchings
 Joly
 Jowhari
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 Lebouthillier
 Leslie
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 Maloney

Government Orders

Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	Ng
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sorbara
Spengemann	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Trudeau	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Wzesneskiy	Yip
Young	Zahid— 162

PAIRED

Members

Chen	Harvey
Moore	Thériault— 4

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 lost. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 2, 4 to 8, 11, 18 to 21 and 23 to 27 lost.

[*English*]

The question is on Motion No. 9. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 10 and 13 to 16.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it you will find unanimous consent to apply the results of the previous vote to this vote, with Liberal members voting in favour.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply, with Conservative members voting no.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote and will vote yes.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the vote and will vote in favour of the motion.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party agrees to apply the vote and votes yes.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, I agree, and the People's Party will vote against the motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Erin Weir: The CCF agrees to apply and will vote yes.

Hon. Tony Clement: I am voting no, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I was not here for the first vote but for this vote, I will be voting in favour.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. minister for that clarification.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I too was not here for the first vote, but I will be voting yes.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member.

(The House divided on Motion No. 9, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 999*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Bennett
Benson	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Bratina	Breton
Brosseau	Cannings
Caron	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Choquette	Christopherson
Cormier	Cullen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Donnelly	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr	Garneau
Garrison	Gerretsen

Government Orders

Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale	Dreeshen	Eglinski
Gould	Graham	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Fast
Hajdu	Hardcastle	Finley	Gallant
Hardie	Hébert	Généreux	Genius
Hehr	Hogg	Harder	Hoback
Holland	Housefather	Jeneroux	Kelly
Hughes	Hussen	Kent	Kitchen
Hutchings	Iacono	Kmiec	Kusie
Johns	Jolibois	Lake	Leitch
Joly	Jordan	Liepert	Lloyd
Jowhari	Khalid	Lobb	Lukiwski
Kwan	Lambropoulos	MacKenzie	Maguire
Lametti	Lamoureux	Martel	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Laverdière	LeBlanc	Motz	Nater
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre	Nicholson	Nuttall
Leslie	Lightbound	O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Lockhart	Long	Poillievre	Rayes
Longfield	Ludwig	Reid	Rempel
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor	Saroya	Scheer
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Schmale	Shields
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	Shiple	Sorenson
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Stanton	Strahl
May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon	Stubbs	Sweet
McDonald	McGuinty	Tilson	Trost
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Van Kesteren	Wagantall
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès	Warawa	Warkentin
Medicino	Mihychuk	Waugh	Webber
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)		Wong	Yurdiga
Monsef		Zimmer— 83	
Morneau	Morrissey		
Murray	Nantel		
Nassif	Nault		
Ng	O'Connell		
Oliphant	Oliver		
O'Regan	Ouellette		
Paradis	Pauzé		
Peschisolido	Peterson		
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott		
Picard	Plamondon		
Poissant	Quach		
Qualtrough	Ramsey		
Rankin	Ratansi		
Rioux	Robillard		
Rodriguez	Rogers		
Romanado	Rota		
Rudd	Ruimy		
Rusnak	Sahota		
Saini	Sajjan		
Samson	Sangha		
Sansoucy	Sarai		
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke		
Schulte	Serré		
Sgro	Shanahan		
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)		
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand		
Simms	Sorbara		
Spengemann	Ste-Marie		
Tabbara	Tan		
Tassi	Trudeau		
Trudel	Vandal		
Vandenbeld	Vaughan		
Virani	Weir		
Whalen	Wilkinson		
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesniewski		
Yip	Young		
Zahid— 203			

PAIRED

Members

Chen Harvey
Moore Thériault— 4

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 9 carried. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 10 and 13 to 16 carried.

[*Translation*]

The next question is on Motion No. 17. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 3 and 22.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent to apply the results of the previous vote to this vote, with Liberal members voting for the motion.

• (1830)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply and will be voting no.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote and will vote no.

NAYS

Members

Aboultiaf	Albas
Albrecht	Alleslev
Allison	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Brassard
Carrie	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty

Government Orders

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to apply the vote and will vote in favour of the motion.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party agrees to apply the vote and votes yes.

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, the People's Party agrees to apply the vote, and I will vote no.

[*English*]

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, the CCF agrees to apply and will vote no.

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the vote, and I am voting no.

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 17 which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 1000)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boudrias
Bratina	Breton
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fuhr
Garneau	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Hajdu	Hardie
Hébert	Hehr
Hogg	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Khalid
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	May (Saarich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Soeurs	Morneau
Monsef	Murray
Morrissey	

Nassif
Ng
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Spengemann
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Yip
Zahid — 169

Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Tan
Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

NAYS

Members

Aboultarif	Albas
Albrecht	Alleslev
Allison	Anderson
Arnold	Ashton
Aubin	Barlow
Barrett	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Block	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brousseau	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Cullen	Davies
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeschen	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseau	Duvall
Eglinski	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast	Finley
Gallant	Garrison
Généreux	Genuis
Hardcastle	Harder
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Jolibois	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Laverdière	Leitch
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Martel
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Poilievre	Quach
Ramsey	Rankin
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Sansoucy

Saroya
Schmale
Shiple
Stanton
Stubbs
Tilson
Trudel
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Wong
Zimmer— 117

Scheer
Shields
Sorenson
Strahl
Sweet
Trost
Van Kesteren
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

PAIRED

Members

Chen
Moore

Harvey
Thériault— 4

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 17 carried. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 3 and 22 carried.

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in at report stage with further amendments.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 1001*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Chagger
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Ehsassi

Alghabra
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Bennett
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury

Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Gameau
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Hajdu
Hébert
Hogg
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jowhari
Lambropoulos
Lamouroux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinity
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Nassif
Ng
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Spengemann
Tan
Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

Government Orders

Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser (West Nova)
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Goodale
Graham
Hardie
Hehr
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jordan
Khalid
Lametti
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKay
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morneau
Murray
Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sorbara
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Yip
Zahid— 164

NAYS

Members

Albas
Alleslev
Anderson
Ashton
Barlow
Benson
Bergen
Berthold
Blaikie
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Caron
Chong

Private Member's Business

Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Cullen
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeshen
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Eglinski
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Fast
Finley	Fortin
Gallant	Garrison
Généreux	Genuis
Hardcastle	Harder
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Jolibois	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Krniec	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Laverdière	Leitch
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Martel
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
McCaughey (Edmonton West)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Plamondon
Poillievre	Quach
Ramsey	Rankin
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Sansoucy
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Shipley	Sorenson
Stanton	Ste-Marie
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tilson
Trost	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Weir	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 122

PAIRED

Members

Chen	Harvey
Moore	Thériault — 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that the opposition day designated for Wednesday, February 27 has been undesignated and will now take place on Monday, March 18.

● (1840)

[English]

The Speaker: It being 6:40 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

BILLS OF EXCHANGE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-369, An Act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Indigenous Peoples Day), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed without debate to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, NDP) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, today is indeed a good day. Today I am proud to rise on behalf of my constituents in Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River to present my private member's bill for one last time in the House of Commons.

This was a journey that began what feels like ages ago, and there is a sense of comfort as this stage of our work together on this comes to an end.

It is not lost on me, and it should not be lost on all our hon. colleagues in Parliament, that it was not too far from here that Canada's system of residential schools was created. It was in these halls that political leaders from across Canada decided that the cultures of first nations, Métis and Inuit people had no place in Canada. It was in the chambers not too far from here that leaders spoke for hours about how first nations, Métis and Inuit people were not deserving enough to speak their own languages. Not too far from here a Canadian prime minister stood with the backing of his party and decided that first nations, Métis and Inuit people needed to be silenced, separated and struck down.

Today I stand here with a small amount of pride and a great amount of humility knowing that history is back on the course of justice. Today is the result of countless hours of consultation with my elders, with my constituents and with the history of our people. Today is another step toward our multipartisan effort to fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action number 80. Today's bill is the product of a multi-party effort to best honour the legacy of residential schools, to honour survivors and to think about how to do right by indigenous people in Canada for generations to come.

Private Member's Business

I want to thank the members of the Canadian heritage committee for the thoughtful consideration and time they put in to making my bill happen. No single individual or political party can claim ownership of how we proceed on our path toward true reconciliation. Reconciliation is a goal that we all have an obligation to work toward and reflect on. This includes not only us as members of Parliament, but also our staff and everyone who works for the Government of Canada.

My bill will affect those of us in the federal service, because it was this government that decided to persecute and oppress the first nations, Métis and Inuit people across Canada. It is a tragedy that we all must atone for, and we must all work together toward fixing the systemic racism that is so commonly found in Canada's colonial government.

I do not want to give the impression that today is the end of our journey toward reconciliation. In the grand scheme of things, we have achieved very little on our journey. Everyone will shake hands and pat each other's backs after today, just as they did after the heritage committee, and claim victory in the name of political points. However, working on reconciliation is not a political platform. It is a moral obligation to do the right thing.

It is also worth noting that our work on the national day of truth and reconciliation is far from over. When I first proposed my bill, it was clear to me after my consultations that June 21 should be a statutory holiday. June 21, National Indigenous Peoples Day, is a day that has been chosen by first nations, Métis and Inuit people in Canada because there is spiritual significance for many related to the summer solstice.

Knowing this, the Government of Canada funds nationwide celebrations from coast to coast. The government provides the funding for first nations, Métis and Inuit people to publicly celebrate who they are, where they come from and where they will be tomorrow. These celebrations would take place anyway, but that the government has a system for non-indigenous people to participate in our celebrations is well thought out and welcome.

However, such a funding system is not currently in place for the national day of truth and reconciliation. The government has made a public commitment that this holiday will be taking place this year, but we have yet to see any action on what the government plans to do on this new holiday. This is particularly important because our intention was never to just give federal employees another day off work; it was intended to be a day for federal employees to engage with the first nations, Métis and Inuit communities that surround them so they could better understand the system of oppression that still exists.

● (1845)

An empty commitment from the government is not acceptable. Without clear guidance from the government, done with the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous people, this holiday will mean nothing if federal employees are not engaged in a meaningful way with the history and legacy of residential schools. I, along with my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, call on all members of Parliament to put the work in and make sure that this holiday is meaningful.

There is also concern, and I have heard this from a number of my constituents, that limiting this holiday to just employees of the federal government is not a comprehensive response to call to action number 80. I fully recognize the limits of the federal government. We do not have the ability to legislate for the provinces in this matter, but I believe that we should do everything within our power to talk to our friends within the provincial governments to take up this call to action themselves.

It was not just the federal government that carried out the harm against first nations, Métis and Inuit children in residential schools. Provincial education boards and employees were directly responsible for much of the harm that has been caused. Everyone who has a seat in this chamber has an obligation to reflect on this holiday but also an obligation to have difficult conversations with their friends, families and their own elected representatives so that all people across Canada will have the time to appropriately think about the impact of residential schools that continues to be felt. We owe that to survivors. We owe that to victims. We owe that to Canada.

My last concern is likely the most important concern I have, and it has to do with the scope of the holiday. I first proposed June 21 as the date of this holiday, because National Indigenous Peoples Day is inclusive of the overwhelming majority of first nations, Métis and Inuit people from across Canada. Changing the holiday to September 30 and renaming it the national day of truth and reconciliation would not be harmful on its own, but it does make me wonder about those indigenous people who have had their culture taken from them by the federal government outside of residential schools.

In particular, I think about the survivors of boarding schools and day schools who are still waiting for the government to listen to their stories. I think about all the children who were taken from their families as part of the sixties scoop, forever taken from their families, their cultures, and their languages. Yes, this day of reconciliation would be good, but would it be inclusive of their truth and stories? I very much look forward to continuing to have these discussions with people across northern Saskatchewan, and I invite all members of Parliament to open their hearts and their ears and invite these stories to come into their lives.

I have expressed these concerns in the past to committee members, and they have provided me with assurances that these are conversations the government wants to have. It is with great honour that I accept my job as the member of Parliament for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River to hold the government to account and make sure that it meets the full intention of what this holiday would work so hard to achieve. It is not a small task, and it must be taken seriously and with the highest amount of respect. I will be watching, indigenous people will be watching and all of Canada will be watching.

At this point, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the amendments to the bill and speak to why the bill should pass through this chamber and head over to the other place.

Private Member's Business

When I introduced my bill here a few years ago, I proposed that June 21 be the statutory holiday, for reasons I outlined previously in my comments today. At that time, the Assembly of First Nations, the Congress for Aboriginal Peoples, the Government of the Northwest Territories, and many other prominent indigenous organizations and people across this country all called for the creation of June 21 as a statutory holiday recognizing National Indigenous Peoples Day.

• (1850)

I do not view amending this bill to make September 30 a national day of truth and reconciliation as a bad thing, so long as the government adequately addresses the concerns I raised earlier in my comments. What I was hoping to achieve with my bill was to begin a national conversation about a holiday honouring survivors and the legacy of residential schools, and today's debate shows that this is something we have achieved together.

I am very happy to see that the democratic process worked and that we had a public conversation, through the committee process, about this holiday. As the Minister of Heritage himself has said, imperfect bills are presented and amended through the committees of this House. That is how our democracy is supposed to work, and with regard to this bill, it has worked.

At committee, we heard from elders, national indigenous organizations, indigenous women's organizations, labour unions, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and a number of chiefs from across Canada. The overwhelming response from them was that September 30 should be a day of truth and reconciliation.

There are a number of people across Canada who may be upset that this bill has been changed, and with them I empathize. I put forward the best case I could for June 21 and National Indigenous Peoples Day, but after a lot of thinking and a lot of consultation, we have, in my opinion, really and truly identified an appropriate date for this holiday to take place. My door is always open to continue having this conversation, because it is far from over. It is my commitment to my constituents to always be there to listen.

One of the best lessons I have taken away from this consultation process is the idea that there is a difference between days of celebration and days of mourning. June 21 as an established day of celebration has its place. A day of truth and reconciliation cannot be included within existing celebrations. For this reason, I welcome the amendments to the bill.

As I have said before, September 30 has become more and more recognized across the country as a day to reconcile with our history. In both northern Saskatchewan and here in Ottawa, I was very encouraged to see so many people in orange shirts saying to the world that what happened to first nations, Metis, and Inuit children and families was unacceptable. I am so encouraged by the work of others to improve the lives of indigenous children across Canada. I am inspired by people like Dr. Cindy Blackstock, who has dedicated so much of her life to working towards child welfare in Canada. I also think often about the work that elders, friendship centres, indigenous culture camps and educators do across the country to bring young people back into the culture of their family. I think about Kevin Lewis, who runs a program like this in northern Saskatchewan.

I also think about the indigenous activists in Canada who have fought so hard to make sure that indigenous voices are heard by this government. I think of the indigenous women who refused to stay idle when the government threatened their land and indigenous sovereignty. I think of the stolen sisters, who remind us every day of generations of indigenous women who continue to live on in our hearts. I think of people like Colleen Hele-Cardinal, who worked almost single-handedly to make sure that survivors of the sixties scoop see the justice they are owed.

I say all this to remind the members of this House of the context in which our debate today takes place. First nations, Métis and Inuit people have been fighting so hard for so long for their people. To establish this day of truth and reconciliation is not to pat ourselves on the back. It is to give ourselves the opportunity to learn more about their work and how we can incorporate their ideas so that indigenous people can have justice and tell survivors of residential schools that what we have done to them will never happen again.

• (1855)

The calls to action put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are not a checklist of things to be achieved. Completing just one call to action is not a step towards progress. Until the day all calls to action are completed, we have very little to celebrate. Today we feel good, but tomorrow we must work harder. Today we look toward a brighter future, but tomorrow we must work harder to make life better for first nations, Métis and Inuit people in Canada.

On September 30, we will remember and honour the past and future, but on every other day of the year we must fight to reverse the injustices committed against the indigenous people in Canada.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the parliamentary secretary reached out to me late last week about the possibility of changing my opportunity for Private Members' Business tonight with the member for Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, I was extremely honoured. This opportunity to fast-track this private member's bill so that it can go before the Senate to have September 30 as the day to recognize truth and reconciliation with indigenous peoples is very important. We want to get this done before the House rises for the summer so that this year will be the first year it is commemorated.

I want to thank the member, but I also want to ask her about something. She raised some very interesting points about the actions required by the federal government to ensure the day is meaningful. If she could elaborate a little on the specific types of events she would like to see federal workers engaged in so they can participate in the truth and reconciliation process, I would love to hear specific examples.

• (1900)

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, the date of September 30 is very significant to the survivors of residential schools, as well as to boarding school and day school survivors.

Private Member's Business

The meaning of reconciliation is that of coming together and healing. Now is the time as we move forward. We reach out to the kids in schools across Canada, from public and provincially run schools to reserves across Canada and the territories. This is the time for the federal government to lead the way on what it means to build better relationships, to follow through with its commitments and to work really hard at continuing to improve relationships and the lives of first nations, Métis and Inuit people.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words and the hard work of my colleague from Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

As she knows, there are some concerns that we have expressed on our side. It is not to say that we do not appreciate, value and honour the need for this holiday, but around that date we also have Labour Day, the day of national reconciliation and Thanksgiving as statutory holidays, all within a period of six weeks, which requires some very practical considerations, so I would ask why she did not consider a substitution. We cannot keep adding holidays. Perhaps there will come a time when we will look at the existing holidays to determine if they are as relevant or important as what is happening here.

I put that forward to her in a more practical sense in terms of what might have been something that would have been helpful.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, Canada has a rich history when it comes to first nations, Métis and Inuit, but history has not been kind to indigenous people from coast to coast to coast. There is enough evidence that first nations, Métis and Inuit people across Canada have been harmed over and over again.

With the truth and reconciliation work that was done, I hear about elders, young people and families across Canada wanting to heal and move on. We honour the past. That is what was laid out in truth and reconciliation, and I want to hear from elders across Canada. It is a very important time in our Canadian history to truly honour first nations, Métis and Inuit people, and we as Canadians and the Canadian government in the House of Commons in this area must start demonstrating that.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak to Bill C-369, an act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code, national day for truth and reconciliation. This was introduced by the member representing Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

This bill proposes to amend the relevant legislation in order to establish a paid non-working holiday for all employees under federal jurisdiction. The goal of the bill is to create a statutory holiday that would become a day for truth and reconciliation in order that all Canadians might have some time to reflect on the history and the legacy of Indian residential schools and the deep wounds that have been created in our past and that persist today.

Renewing the relationship with first nations, Inuit and Métis is a priority for Canada and all Canadians. As members know, the Prime Minister has said that there is no relationship more important to this great nation than the one with indigenous peoples. I am confident that we can chart a path to a better, more inclusive future that acknowledges our past and looks forward to building a stronger Canada that we can all reside in together, in a manner that is not only conducive but inclusive to all Canadians.

The work that was done by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has provided us with a way forward to address indigenous issues in a Canadian society. The commission's final report sets aside a series of 94 calls to action that address a number of important issues, including call to action 80, which states:

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

The government remains committed to implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as partners in reconciliation and, most important, resurgence.

While it is easy to support the commission's recommendations in principle, the more difficult work comes in taking concrete action, but we are intent on walking the path toward reconciliation together.

Over the past three months, the Standing Commission on Canadian Heritage heard from survivors, leaders of national indigenous organizations and other key stakeholders during the review of the bill. Survivors shared very moving and difficult testimony regarding the history and impact of Indian residential schools. There was also discussion of the importance of giving Canadians opportunities to move together on the journey of reconciliation. It is extremely important that we move together, nation to nation, shoulder to shoulder.

Education, reflection and remembrance are essential components of the reconciliation process. Creating a national day for truth and reconciliation on September 30 will set aside a special day for commemoration and for honouring those whose lives were affected by residential schools. As well, it would also create a space for all Canadians to have important conversations about the dark chapters in our history and to acknowledge that reconciliation is a process that we all do together. As well, it would acknowledge the harm done to first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

• (1905)

With just over half of Canadians familiar with residential schools and their lasting impacts, a national day for truth and reconciliation would, in my opinion, improve Canadians' understanding of this legacy of loss.

I applaud the initiative put forward in the bill by the hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River. I would also like to recognize the work of those in the community and throughout this great nation who have taken steps to rebuild relationships and further reconciliation. I applaud those who at the grassroots level have shared their stories and helped teach us about our past.

We should all be moved by people like Phyllis (Jack) Webstad and the story of her orange shirt. Her story is remarkable but it is not unique. On her first day of school, Phyllis arrived proudly dressed in her new orange shirt. They made her change out of her clothes. Her orange shirt was taken from her and she never saw it again. That orange shirt is now a symbol of the stripping away of culture, of freedom and of self-esteem that was experienced by indigenous children over generations.

Private Member's Business

During its mandate, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission engaged extensively with the community. It was guided by principles that ensured broad representation. The commission was advised by a committee of Indian residential school survivors and it travelled to all parts of this great nation to hear from thousands of indigenous peoples who were affected by residential schools, to document their experiences and also to gather ideas that would help to move the reconciliation process. The 94 calls to action are a result of this process.

There have been over the past months a number of petitions expressing support for the creation of a day highlighting reconciliation. We hope that the bill will be a first step toward establishing a holiday that encourages all Canadians, from coast to coast to coast, to take time to reflect on our journey of reconciliation with indigenous peoples, to gather together to honour survivors of residential schools, their families and their communities, and to encourage public commemoration and promotion of the shared values of inclusion and of mutual respect.

Let us make sure that the spirit of reconciliation is part of nation building and our national values. In this way, I believe we can aspire to an outcome that is aligned with the commitment to renew the relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples, based on recognition, based on rights, based on respect and based on co-operation.

It is obvious that for too long, first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples have had to fight for rights and recognition. We know that we must make this recognition the basis for all relations with indigenous peoples. The bill represents an ideal way to commemorate and recognize their experience. I am therefore pleased to contribute to today's debate and to call upon the House to support the bill. This support is a part of the work that helps us build a Canada that includes every one of us.

* * *

● (1910)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the deferred recorded division on motion M-194, standing in the name of the member for Sault Ste. Marie, and motion M-206, standing in the name of the member for Newmarket—Aurora, currently scheduled on Wednesday, February 27, 2019, immediately before the time provided for Private Members' Business, be deferred anew to immediately after the time provided for Oral Questions of that day.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BILLS OF EXCHANGE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-369, An Act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation), be read the third time and passed.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to rise for debate at second reading and again tonight at third reading. This is the bill to amend the Bills of Exchange Act and the Interpretation Act.

I want to congratulate my colleague for Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River for this important bill before us. I also want to acknowledge the very important words that have been said today, such as “a path forward” and the “need for reconciliation in Canada”.

I will start by commenting on what the bill would do.

Many people are not aware that federally regulated workers represent approximately 900,000 workers in Canada. What we are talking about in this bill is about 6% of the work force. I think people wonder if this will impact schools and other areas. We can only regulate federally regulated workers, so we are only talking about them. It is about 900,000 workers. Approximately one-third of them are public servants across Canada, which is about 6% of the total work force. These people work for Crown corporations, banks, marines, ports and railways, as well as employees of telephone companies and others. Those are the people we are talking about with respect to this statutory holiday.

I did ask a question of my colleague. I truly wish the committee had dealt with the one issue that perhaps is my biggest concern about the bill. They have moved the date to September. We have Labour Day. We then will have this day of reconciliation and then a short time late will be Thanksgiving.

Over the years we keep adding days to our statutory holidays, both federally and provincially, but we never look at the statutory holidays in existence to determine which ones may not make sense anymore. It is important for us as Canadians to honour, recognize and provide support for the survivors of this very dark chapter in our history. Maybe we need to look at something like Thanksgiving and determine whether it still makes sense or the many other holidays we have.

I would have been more comfortable and pleased to support the bill had there been discussion about it being an exchange, that we would create a new statutory holiday but we would perhaps look at taking away one of the existing statutory holidays.

People might think it is not a big deal, but the substitution concept is important. There is an impact with a statutory holiday. RCMP officers will get paid time and a half. We know our federal public payroll for a day is in the \$195 million range. It will not be a dollar-for-dollar exchange. There will be an impact in the people who have to work overtime and in productivity. There will be a financial impact due to this bill. This is why we thought substitution would have been a much better option. We have an impact and we have many priorities.

I just want to reflect on some of the work we have been doing at committees, both at the heritage committee and at the indigenous committee.

• (1915)

The indigenous languages bill is before committee right now, where we are hearing how important language is going to be to the youth for their sense of connection to the culture.

We know it is important. Witnesses have consistently said that this legislation is important, but funding needs to be attached to it to get the job done.

I see the indigenous languages bill and the funding that is appropriately attached to it as something that will have more of an impact on the children and communities than someone in the banking industry honouring, hopefully, the day the way it should be honoured. We only need to look at Labour Day and the degree to which people participate for the reason we have Labour Day.

Remembrance Day across this country is not a statutory holiday, and I would suggest that people participate in veterans day in a very robust way. We do not need to have a statutory holiday to get to the meaning of what we are trying to accomplish.

The government has a deficit that is much larger than what it committed to. It is going to be \$19 billion, which is much higher than what it told Canadians it would be. The Liberals do not seem to ever think about how to best spend money to make a real difference.

The indigenous languages bill is incredibly important. Education is incredibly important.

In January, the Liberals promised to table a bill on child welfare. It is going to be March pretty soon, and I do not know where that bill is. It will be an important bill, though, and hopefully they have done it right. It too is going to need resources attached to it so that we can actually accomplish what we need to accomplish.

I wish this were a substitution holiday and that we could perhaps remove an existing holiday and substitute this one, because then I could wholeheartedly support the bill. We could find no analysis in terms of understanding the implications of the bill. If I am going to spend significant dollars, I would much prefer to spend those dollars in communities, knowing that they will make a real difference for the children in those communities.

I recognize the many calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I talked about the languages. I talked about child welfare and how we are not moving forward. I think some of the calls to action are higher priorities and are more important to move forward on quickly. We know that some of the languages are dying as we speak.

The government has to make decisions. It needs to look at the calls to action and decide how to best approach them. The Liberals never really had a good plan. They just said that they were going to support them all, that they were going to implement them all, but they have never tabled a plan in terms of priorities and how we should move forward in partnership with first nation communities and the implications of each one. I have not seen that work done.

Private Member's Business

For the reasons I have articulated, it is with great regret that I will not be able to support this legislation.

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will begin my speech by acknowledging that the land on which we are gathered today to speak to the important bill introduced by colleague from Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River is part of the traditional unceded territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin people.

I think it is especially important to point that out because, from a reconciliation perspective, I want every elected member of the House to remember that historical fact during this evening's debate.

Call to action 80 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada states:

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

It is in this context that my colleague introduced her bill to make National Indigenous Peoples Day a statutory holiday in Canada. As everyone is well aware, there are currently no federal statutory holidays dedicated to indigenous peoples. National Indigenous Peoples Day does exist and has been celebrated on June 21 since 1996, but it is not recognized as a statutory holiday under the Canada Labour Code.

Bill C-369 calls on the federal Parliament to show some leadership and set an example for the provincial and territorial governments that have not yet created this statutory holiday, in response to the call to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Reconciliation is not an indigenous issue, it is a Canadian issue. To achieve true reconciliation, we may be called upon to re-examine all aspects of Canadian society.

That is why the commission is calling on all levels of government in Canada to take concerted action and measures across the entire country and in all communities in the interest of reconciliation with first nations, Métis and Inuit.

To achieve that goal, merely recognizing the existence of these peoples is not enough. We must also recognize their history, their rights, their cultures and their languages.

By passing Bill C-369, the House of Commons would be sending a clear message about its intention to create space for reconciliation.

Once established, this national holiday would serve as a reminder to us all of what it really means to have a treaty-based nation-to-nation relationship. It would be an expression of respect for the historic and cultural importance of first nations, Métis and Inuit.

The people we wish to recognize by creating this statutory holiday are the first inhabitants of this continent, who arrived when the glaciers disappeared from these lands.

Private Member's Business

When the first French settlers arrived, indigenous people helped them survive by showing them how to adapt to the environment and the harsh climate, which was unfamiliar to the first Europeans to set foot in North America.

Of course, the bill would not tackle all the socio-economic problems faced by indigenous people, which my party raises all the time in the House.

In passing, I would like to mention the atrocious and intolerable living conditions found in too many indigenous communities throughout the territory that we now call Canada. The federal government continues to drag its feet. We need a targeted housing strategy for indigenous people.

Naturally, the creation of a holiday must be accompanied by significant action to improve living conditions for indigenous peoples in Canada. However, dedicating a holiday to indigenous peoples would provide a time and space for reflection on our colonial history and its lasting effects on the rights of first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples across Canada.

For example, this holiday could become an opportunity to organize events to commemorate and raise awareness about victims of residential schools and Canada's colonial system, the effects of which still weigh heavily on indigenous peoples today.

My colleague's bill is not a new idea. In 1982, the National Indian Brotherhood, now known as the Assembly of First Nations, launched a campaign to have National Aboriginal Day recognized as a national holiday.

It was not until 1996 that June 21 was proclaimed National Aboriginal Day by then governor general Roméo LeBlanc.

This date was chosen after consultations with indigenous peoples and statements of support from numerous groups, some of which wanted the summer solstice to become National Aboriginal Day.

When my colleague originally introduced this bill, she also asked that National Aboriginal Day, June 21, be designated a federal statutory holiday.

● (1925)

At the time, the national day for truth and reconciliation was not clearly defined. Since 2016, Orange Shirt Day has become the appropriate day to commemorate the legacy of residential schools and honour their survivors. The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, which was in charge of studying Bill C-369, consulted first nations, Inuit and Métis, and they all agreed that September 30 should be considered the day of commemoration. The bill was amended to designate that date as the national day for truth and reconciliation.

As I said earlier, other governments in Canada have responded to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 80 by making National Indigenous Peoples Day a statutory holiday. It is a statutory holiday in the Northwest Territories and has been a holiday in Yukon since May 2017.

In June 2017, my colleague from Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River introduced the bill we are debating today to get the federal government on board. In September 2017, provincial

NDP MPP Michael Mantha introduced a bill in the Ontario legislature entitled An Act to proclaim Indigenous Day and make it a holiday.

The federal government has stated many times that its most important relationship is its relationship with indigenous peoples. The government also committed to responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action in a spirit of reconciliation and healing. Elected officials in other governments get it. This bill gives the government another opportunity to move from words to action.

Inspired by the commission's call to action 80, this bill would give hope to indigenous peoples by fostering awareness of the consequences of residential schools and paying tribute to residential school survivors and victims of foster family abuse, as well as their families and their communities.

In addition, a statutory holiday would give Canadians an opportunity to better understand and acknowledge our shared history, which is a crucial component of reconciliation. This bill gives the federal government, as well as the House of Commons, a chance to participate in the reconciliation process by designating a day to reflect on our dark colonial past and to pay tribute to the contributions, heritage, and diverse cultures and languages of indigenous peoples.

Long before the environment became a topical issue, indigenous people respected the environment and took a sustainable management approach. They developed democratic political and social systems. They understood the importance of forging alliances, and their diplomatic structure played an important role in the early days of settlement. We also have a lot to learn from their customs, including sharing and showing profound respect for elders. Many prominent indigenous figures and indigenous-led projects have helped give them a voice and earn recognition for indigenous contributions, heritage and cultures.

Kondiaronk, also known as Sastaretsi, sacrificed his life to help put an end to devastating wars by signing the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701. In Quebec, Wapikoni Mobile helps young people and gives them a voice. That is how Anishinabe rapper Samian found fame. Cindy Blackstock advocates on behalf of indigenous children who have been abandoned by the Canadian government. Melissa Mollen Dupuis, an Innu from the North Shore who co-founded the Quebec chapter of the Idle No More movement, advocates for environmental protection and for access to education, health care and adequate housing.

New Democrats are not the only ones who support the creation of a statutory holiday to recognize indigenous peoples. The Assembly of First Nations has been calling for this for years. Bobby Cameron, the chief of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, has supported this measure since 2017. Robert Bertrand, the national chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, has also publicly expressed support.

Private Member's Business

I would like to conclude my speech by reading an excerpt from the farewell message of our friend Paul Dewar, who was taken from us too soon. At Paul's celebration of life, indigenous leader Claudette Commanda talked about how Paul had been given an eagle feather, which represents honesty, integrity and authenticity, and she thanked him for what he had done for her people.

Paul said:

• (1930)

[*English*]

Ottawa, don't stop now. Let's show our strength together. Let's embrace the vision of Algonquin elder William Commanda for an authentic and organic future, rooted in the wisdom of the Indigenous people upon whose land we reside.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a pleasure it is to rise on this very important piece of legislation, which I believe has widespread support that goes far beyond this chamber.

When we talk about indigenous peoples in Canada, there is no doubt that there is no relationship that is more important than that between Canada and indigenous peoples. In fact, we often hear the Prime Minister and others in the House talk about that very special relationship. A big part of that is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, in which there were a series of 94 recommendations. In fact, one of the documents I keep at hand is those 94 recommendations.

What we are talking about today is a recommendation that was a call to action from the report. I would like to read into the record exactly what call to action 80 is calling on the government, or members of Parliament, to act on. It says:

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

This is something that has been discussed a great deal in the House on a number of different fronts. Today we are talking about the importance of call to action 80, dealing with recognizing a national holiday, which would be September 30 of every year. That is something I believe we see support for from both sides. I can appreciate the Conservative Party is not necessarily onside with it for whatever reason, but it is fair to say that all members recognize the importance of having a designation.

I would like to think that when we talk about reconciliation and the importance of remembering and appreciating what actually took place during the residential school era, it is taken seriously at all different levels. I would like to think, for example, that our schools have a role to play in this. I would like to think, as has been pointed out, even provincial entities have a role to play in this. What we are seeing today is that the House of Commons, because it is not just the Government of Canada but members of Parliament on all sides of the House, is recognizing the importance of that particular call to action. That speaks volumes about the amount of goodwill.

When the previous speaker was concluding her remarks, we could see the emotion and the importance of this very issue. Over the last number of years we have seen some really wonderful debates. At

times they can be very emotional debates that take place, and some of the more emotional debates that I have witnessed, sitting in the chamber, happen when we talk about reconciliation with indigenous peoples in Canada.

This is not the first time we have been addressing the truth and reconciliation report and the many different calls to action. Just a couple of weeks ago in the chamber, we were talking about calls to action 13 and 14. It was yet another piece of legislation that was introduced, this one by a cabinet minister of the government, in essence dealing with language and culture, ensuring that the language of indigenous peoples will be around for generations to come.

• (1935)

During that debate, there was widespread support for the legislation, again because of reconciliation. The Prime Minister indicated, and I believe all of us would agree, that reconciliation is not the responsibility of any one individual. We all have a role to play. That is why I was encouraged today during private members' hour. A member from the Liberal caucus forfeited his spot in order to allow for the legislation to be debated today. It sends a very important message, which is that when it comes to reconciliation, we are prepared to put the politics of partisanship to the side in order to ensure the right thing is done.

I applaud my colleague in the Liberal caucus for offering his position and I applaud the member from the New Democratic Party for bringing forward an important piece of legislation. By working together, we are seeing a greater likelihood of this call to action being addressed. Equally, when other legislation or budgetary measures are brought forward that deal with the calls to action for truth and reconciliation, we see support that bridges more than just one political party.

I represent Winnipeg North and can say that, with an indigenous population somewhere in the neighbourhood of 18% to 20% in my riding, this is a very important issue. Much of the damage that was caused by residential schools people can witness first-hand by walking around the north end of Winnipeg and talking to some of the people, as I have, as to just how severe the impact of residential schools has been. When we see actions by the government to try to tackle these important issues, it is important to me personally and as the representative of Winnipeg North to ensure that we try to advance these very important pieces of legislation.

We know, for example, the government has legislation dealing with child welfare and child welfare is a very serious issue that has to be dealt with. Whether it is the Prime Minister, ministers or the Liberal caucus, or I suspect members from the NDP and the Conservative Party, they recognize that the status quo needs to change. When we bring forward the child welfare legislation, which is not that far away, I anticipate there will be a healthy debate. Hopefully we will get the same sort of support for that legislation as we are seeing for the legislation brought forward by the member opposite. I believe that is what we will see, at least I hope that is what we will see, because it is important.

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I started my comments by saying there is no relationship more important to Canada than the one with indigenous peoples. If we believe that to be true, I highly recommend the report by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, in particular, the fine work that Senator Sinclair did, and the 94 calls to action. Today we are talking about recommendation 80. There is still more to come and I look forward to the ongoing debate and discussion so that members not only in the chamber but well beyond, in all the regions of the country, will recognize just how important it is that we affirm that positive relationship.

•(1940)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): 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.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to follow-up on issues I raised earlier in question period. In particular, I would like to raise an issue that has to do with the Phoenix payroll system.

Simply put, thousands of civilian members of the RCMP have been told that the government is keen to transition them over to the Phoenix payroll system. Currently, they are paid on the payroll system of the RCMP, which has not had the problems that Phoenix has had. Those problems are legion. We know of cases in Elmwood—Transcona of federal public servants who have had their homes put in jeopardy and serious strain put on their families. Civilian members of the RCMP do not want to be put in that same boat and, I think quite reasonably, just want to wait until Phoenix is actually fixed before they are transitioned over.

At one time in the life of this Parliament, the former president of the Treasury Board made a commitment that civilian members of the RCMP would not be transitioned over to the Phoenix payroll system until it was fixed. In fact, a memo went out that said that initiative was indefinitely suspended. Unfortunately, sometime after that, another memo went out saying that it had simply been postponed and that in the spring of 2020, civilian members of the RCMP would be transitioned over.

This week, we heard that an internal government memo estimated that it may take up to 10 years to fix the Phoenix payroll system, and it will certainly take four or five years. For those who are not great at math, it means that the spring of 2020 will come long before the government itself estimates that Phoenix will be fixed. It is quite reasonable that civilian members of the RCMP want to wait until that is over.

Therefore, I am looking for some reassurance from the government today that it will wait until it has Phoenix right before

it puts the pay of thousands of civilian members of the RCMP, who do great work on behalf of and for Canadians, in jeopardy. That is what I am here to ask. Would the government kindly wait until Phoenix is fixed to make this transition so they are not subjected to undue strain because of the payroll system?

•(1945)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the late shows, as they are referred to here among us, generally follow on questions asked in question period, and the issues raised around the RCMP are not related to the question that generated this opportunity to have a follow-up question. I will ensure that the member opposite gets a response from the minister responsible. Those specifics, while not dealt with in the original question, have emerged subsequent to the conversations and deserve a clear response.

In relation to the Phoenix pay system, we know the ongoing problems have caused unacceptable hardships for hard-working and good people in the public service, including our families, in many cases. Our government has been taking action on this complicated file and we will continue to do so until all employees are paid accurately and fairly for the work they have done, every time. This is the minister's top priority.

I would like to also take this opportunity to update the House on the significant progress that has been made to stabilize the Phoenix system. Public Services and Procurement Canada is working with the Treasury Board Secretariat as they focus on options for the next generation of the human resources pay system.

The Auditor General's report states that this issue began because the scope and complexity of pay transformation was vastly underestimated. As well, system functionality, testing and training were de-scoped in order to save money. In other words, the previous government saved money on the backs of public servants. This is unconscionable. It did this to meet timelines and balance its budget, not to make sure people were paid properly. Indeed, the report confirms that what we have long maintained on this issue is true.

We have taken steps to immediately implement the Auditor General's recommendations by strengthening policy instruments, governance structures and project management approaches around government-wide information technology initiatives. We will improve training, become engaged earlier and analyze project trends and issues more deeply as we go forward.

In addition, we have implemented measures to stabilize the pay system and reduce the backlog of late transactions and wait times for missing pay. These measures are well aligned with the recommendations made by the Auditor General. I want to briefly elaborate on these measures. Increased capacity and improved service are two of the key accomplishments. With the funding provided by budget 2018 of \$431.4 million over six years to continue to address pay challenges, we have increased the number of employees at the pay centre and regional offices to more than 1,500 public servants. That is more than double the number of compensation advisers since Phoenix was launched.

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In addition, our government continues to roll out the pay pod delivery model. This is critically important. This new system allows us to group models together for compensation advisers and compensation assistants assigned to specific departments or agencies. These teams work cohesively to process current intake within the effective pay period, while also working through the backlog and addressing outstanding cases in an employee's file. This is in contrast to the previous approach of the last government, which was to address pay issues on a transaction-by-transaction basis.

Our model provides better service to employees in departments and agencies served by the pay centre and is starting to show positive results. Since January of 2018, the number of transactions waiting to be processed in departments and agencies served by pay pods have decreased by over 160,000 individual claims.

● (1950)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I note that this exchange is a follow-up to a series of questions I asked in question period on October 26, 2018. The first was a general question about Phoenix. The supplementary that immediately followed that question went as follows:

It is why civilian members of the RCMP are upset that the government has reversed a previous commitment not to put them on the Phoenix payroll system until it is fixed and instead has created an arbitrary deadline of 2020....

Why are the Liberals risking doing material damage to the men and women of the RCMP when the payroll system is not ready to go and will they reverse the decision?

Therefore, I am very much on topic in my follow-up and in asking the parliamentary secretary to address the issue of RCMP civilian members who are going to be transitioned to Phoenix. This arbitrary deadline creates a lot of anxiety in their lives, particularly as they hear the stories of federal civil servants who have been going through a kind of hell when they are not being paid properly, are overpaid, are underpaid or are not paid at all.

If he is not prepared to answer the question today, could I get a commitment from him with a letter either deferring the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, I would have been able to give a comprehensive response to the request if I had heard it, but unfortunately he was cut off.

What I can stress to the member opposite is that I will certainly try to get the information he asks for regarding the decision involving civilian members of the RCMP and make sure that he understands fully why the decisions that were made have been made.

Let me stress again that we are taking action so that all employees are paid accurately, on time, every time. The Auditor General has said that this is a complex problem with no quick fixes, and our government is taking action on many fronts to stabilize the Phoenix pay system. We are making steady progress and reducing the backlog and keeping it from growing while we eventually implement the new system.

There is a lot of work to be done. Thanks to our integrated approach and making sure that we work with the public service unions and their departments, agencies and employees, we continue to move forward on this file.

Let me add that all of us who deal with this issue on a day-by-day basis in our constituency offices are as committed as the member opposite to making sure that people who work get paid and that we do not balance budgets on the backs of employees by short—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad for this opportunity to readdress the question I put to the Minister of Environment in the House, as the response failed to answer my question and actually gave credence to my concerns.

I will quote from my question and her response, as follows. I said:

Madam Speaker, Boombata Homes is an innovative company that will be hit hard by the Liberal carbon tax imposed on Saskatchewan businesses. It means that families working hard to afford a home will now face even higher prices. It also means that the Liberal affordable housing program will be more expensive.

Jason and Susan know what it will mean for their business, their subcontractors and their construction workers. ... Why do large corporations get exemptions from the government and they do not?

The hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change replied:

When I talk to small businesses, and I have talked to small businesses across the country, what do they want to do? They want to do right by the environment. They want to be more energy efficient, save money and lower their emissions.

I will give the example of VariForm. It is a steel manufacturer in Cambridge. What did it do? It reduced its emissions by 80% and saved a million dollars.

We are going to support small businesses to be more energy efficient so they can save money to reinvest in their businesses and create more jobs.

VariForm has much to be proud of. Its actions were motivated by the very things the minister mentioned: to grow the business while improving its impact on the environment.

However, it is important to note that the minister's example actually affirms the reality that a carbon tax is not necessary and is punitive toward small businesses, because VariForm took most of its actions to achieve this during the Harper government. VariForm was not then threatened with the punishment of a Liberal carbon tax. It seems to me that the VariForm people were rational actors. Since the objective of a business is to maximize profit, they took good environmental actions that added to their bottom line.

One very serious negative implication of the Liberal carbon tax is that SMEs that have taken steps to be more efficient and reduce their carbon footprint will still pay for the Liberal carbon tax with absolutely no recognition of their stewardship.

The Liberal carbon tax, combined with the oppressive regulation regime the Prime Minister is imposing on the resource sector, will undoubtedly increase input costs for businesses, including VariForm. In addition, as a steel manufacturer, it is no doubt being impacted by the steel and aluminum tariffs as well, which are crippling our Canadian steel manufacturing industries.

Adjournment Proceedings

The funds brought into the Liberal coffers by the reciprocal tariffs are not being used to meet the needs of the manufacturers impacted by the tariffs, especially the small and medium-sized enterprises, as they may not meet the requirement of 200 employees to access the program, while large manufacturers again are literally exempt from paying the carbon tax.

These same SMEs were labelled as tax cheats for growing their passive income to cover emergencies, growth of their business and, heaven forbid, their own retirement once they had reached that point in life. Now their passive income is being eaten up trying to keep their business above water so that they can continue to employ their workers.

It appears that putting companies out of business and Canadians into the unemployment lines may be the Liberal solution to reducing greenhouse gases. The Liberal government continues to punish the very Canadians who take the risks, fuel our economy and respect the environment.

We need solutions that incentivize innovation and are a global answer to reducing greenhouse gases. As Conservatives, we believe Canadians will only continue to become more innovative through a sense of responsibility and incentives, such as what farmers and small businesses are doing in Saskatchewan.

It is Canada's leadership opportunity to the world to be an example of good stewardship while growing our economy through private entrepreneurs encouraged by sound science and motivation. The Liberal Prime Minister continues to fail to lead at home and on the world stage.

• (1955)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Yorkton—Melville for her question, both in question period previously and again today.

I want to correct the record. I know the member has indicated on a number of occasions during her remarks that there is some kind of exemption for big business. That is patently false when we look at the facts. What we have established is an output-based pricing system that specifically applies a price on pollution for large emitters.

With respect to the constituents she referenced, like many Canadians, Jason and Susan run a successful business, and they want to know, quite fairly, how putting a price on pollution is going to affect their business.

On the issue of big emitters, the Province of Saskatchewan, I would note, is actually implementing an output-based pricing system for some of its large industry. The federal output-based pricing system will apply to the electricity and natural gas sectors to fill in the gaps.

Large industrial facilities typically emit significant amounts of greenhouse gas pollution and often face competition in jurisdictions that do not yet have a price on pollution. This system will have a price for industry that will help maintain competitiveness relative to international peers.

Under this kind of system, companies will have to pay for emissions over a sector performance standard. If they perform better than the standard, they will get a credit, and if they perform worse than the standard, they will have to pay based on the exact same price signal that applies across the entire economy. The result is that companies will have a continuous incentive to cut pollution and support clean innovation while minimizing the costs they pay.

This approach is recognized as an international best practice. Quebec and Alberta have variations of this kind of a system in effect today. B.C. is developing a similar one, and Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador are putting similar systems into effect. California and the EU have included these kinds of policies in their systems as well.

The federal government, and this is the good news for families, is going to return the majority of all direct proceeds collected in Saskatchewan directly to households, including those of Jason and Susan. A typical family of four in Saskatchewan, when they file their taxes, is actually going to receive a climate action incentive of \$609. It is curious that the members of the opposition would like to take this money from their constituents.

The government will also use proceeds from the federal fuel charge to support small businesses like Boombata Homes. The government recognizes that small businesses are critically important to the Canadian economy. Providing direct support will help them take climate action and lower their energy costs while keeping them competitive. In Saskatchewan, the government estimates that about \$300 million in proceeds will be available over the next five years for small businesses in that province.

Through Canada's climate action and clean growth plan, the government is providing additional financial support to help companies invest in actions that will increase their energy efficiency and reduce their exposure to carbon pricing. For example, since 2016, the Government of Canada has allocated over \$336 million for investments in public transit projects in Saskatchewan, such as bus fleet renewals in Saskatoon and Moose Jaw.

Putting a price on pollution is simply a common-sense way to reduce our emissions, invest in a cleaner tomorrow for our kids and grandkids and help Canada compete in the emerging global low carbon economy.

I note in particular that everyone who has equity in this conversation, including the director of policy for former prime minister Stephen Harper, Doug Ford's chief budget adviser, *The Economist* magazine, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and virtually everyone who has taken a look at climate economics, says this is exactly the kind of thing we should be doing.

We are moving forward with a plan that is going to reduce emissions and make life more affordable for Canadians.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (2000)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is that his responses do not apply in this case, because the money the Liberals are giving back to Canadians is money they have already taken from Canadians. They are simply giving back a portion of that.

I have yet to see anything that indicates that this type of program, which is supposedly revenue-neutral for Canadians, could possibly be that, because we know what it costs for government to do anything. We are not seeing the costs involved for the administration of this type of program by the government. Almost without fault, things tend to balloon even larger. There are also no comments from the government about the additional GST that is going to be charged to Canadians on top of what they are paying.

What I am responding to here, on behalf of my constituents, is that they are already doing all the things that make a difference for the country and do not require a carbon tax to do that.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, perhaps this is an opportunity, in the one minute I have, to just state that when we were trying to develop a plan to help fight climate change while having a minimal impact on the Canadian economy, we actually looked at the advice of experts.

The Nobel Prize winner in economics this past year was actually awarded the prize for the development of this kind of plan. It is actually going to put a price on pollution that might make life more expensive for polluters but will make life more affordable for Canadian families. It is going to help protect competitiveness.

I note, in particular, that the member had some questions about the cost of administration. There is not going to be a single penny that comes out of this price. It is actually going to be taken from the province in which the pollution is generated. Folks from Saskatchewan are actually going to receive more money than other provinces, specifically because there is more pollution coming out of those provinces.

The plan is actually quite simple. We are putting a price on pollution and returning that money to businesses and families in the member's province.

HOUSING

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on October 26, 2018, days after advocates from across Canada visited Ottawa for Housing on the Hill Day, I took the opportunity to highlight some of the struggles facing front-line organizations hoping to access the national housing strategy's co-investment fund.

I asked the hon. minister if he would be willing to get down to work to alleviate the excessive administrative burdens placed on groups with limited resources who are forced to fill out lengthy and onerous applications, with almost 200 questions, to even have a chance at accessing the co-investment fund.

However, that is clearly not the only issue with this fund. This program also has a five-unit minimum, which excludes some smaller viable projects, many of which could be built in smaller towns and rural communities.

The online system for applying to this fund is onerous and difficult to navigate. The help from the government for applicants is

lacking. Applicants have cited incidents of government staff being unable to answer basic questions, and even worse, giving out the wrong information. One applicant stated there was a feeling of learning the process alongside the government staff who were administering the program.

Making funding dependent upon the participation of local or provincial governments makes sense, but waiting for guaranteed commitments from those partners often prevents projects from being submitted in a timely manner. We have a crisis and we need housing now.

Last November, at the one-year anniversary of the release of the national housing strategy, Canadians were provided with an update on achievements to date. The announcement seemed to imply a reporting back on the achievements of the national housing strategy, but in fact included all activity on housing since 2016, investments prior to the launch of the national housing strategy.

The actual progress on the initiatives announced in the national housing strategy, to lots of fanfare, speeches, news releases and media headlines, is much more limited. If we are to truly evaluate the success of the first-ever national housing strategy, the government must live up to its rhetoric on transparency and accountability. Canadians and parliamentarians deserve good information that is accurate and presented in a way that would allow us to actually evaluate the strategy. More facts than fanfare would be appreciated.

The government promised real change, but the rollout of the national housing strategy does not seem to be based in reality. Sadly, the government has been very slow to roll out new investment and to implement the programs touted in the strategy. The words are there but the action on the ground to make a difference and truly roll out the dollars is not.

Every year, 235,000 people experience some form of homelessness in Canada, and almost three million Canadians spend more than 30% of their income on housing. In the face of these shocking numbers, the glacial pace of implementation of the national housing initiative is frustrating for many stakeholders, and more significantly, for the many households in deep need and those on the streets and in emergency shelters all across the country.

Did the minister or a representative sit down and listen to those that know, like the non-profit housing providers, and allow the flexibility they asked for? Did the government then make the necessary changes so that all communities could get down to work and address the housing and homelessness crisis in this country? A yes or no answer with details would be greatly appreciated.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (2005)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes. We sit down with housing providers every day of every week and learn from them what challenges they may encounter in accessing funds through the national housing strategy. The good news is, because of the continual intake process and the continual granting process of this program, as we learn and hear from housing providers from coast to coast to coast, from rural communities, big cities, indigenous communities, remote communities and coastal communities, we are adapting the program to build the system as they build housing.

The results speak for themselves. The members of the party opposite often say that no money is coming until after the election. The reality is that we have already spent more than \$5.7 billion, most of that new money, on the housing system. It was a down payment to get us moving toward the national housing strategy. Now that we are in the midst of the national housing strategy, there is more than \$40 billion forecast over the next 10 years to build housing. The result is that it now exceeds 15,000, since we were given the updated numbers. However, 15,000 new units have been approved or are under construction and close to 150,000 units have been repaired.

The member from British Columbia who said that repairs do not matter is just fundamentally wrong. In the city that I represent, when we took office, we were losing housing faster than we were building it because repair dollars were not being invested. Repair dollars are as essential to the housing system as construction dollars are. In fact, I was in Burnaby just last week, where we announced a total rebuild of a co-op housing program that took the old plumbing out, replaced it with new plumbing, cleaned it of black mould and then replastered the insides of buildings and made them more airtight and therefore more energy efficient. That was one of the co-investment projects that was funded in British Columbia.

We are committed to a number of things. We are committed to building. We are committed to repairing. We are also committed to subsidizing housing. One of the things that the party opposite fails to understand, and its promise shows this when it makes numbers that are global in nature in the same way that Doug Ford in Ontario delivers slogans about housing, is that when the members just say they are going to build a lot of housing, if they are not also simultaneously talking about repairing it, and at the same time subsidizing it and at the same time providing subsidies for housing, they are not actually building a housing system. They are just building housing. If they just build housing and they do not subsidize it into affordability and do not support the people inside it to make sure they can be self-sufficient and they do not program maintenance and operating dollars into the program, they build housing but they do not support people living in housing.

Therefore, our program has been very progressively and properly funded to do all of those things: to support dollars for construction, to support dollars for repair, to support dollars for subsidies and to support dollars for the support of people. The new dollars are flowing as we speak.

I was in Burnaby to announce co-op programs. There were four of them. I was not in Barrie because the weather did not let me, but

Barrie, Ontario, has been granted money. There are three projects in Woodstock. We just announced a project in Toronto last week. There are three programs that we announced in Saskatchewan just a month ago. More is being announced day by day. The system is growing.

The party opposite is right to focus on this as a critical issue for Canada. Good housing programs do not just house people who need the supports. They also create economies in the communities where these projects are presented and they also create platforms for the success of other government interventions around child poverty, veterans, making sure we fight climate change, and making sure that immigrants and refugees are settled properly in this country.

The national housing strategy is real. It is housing real people with real dollars now. The successes are just as real. We listen and change the program to make sure that everybody who applies gets help.

• (2010)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, it is really not for Canadians nor for the opposition to pat the government on the back for what I feel are half-measures. A government committed to a rights-based approach would not have as its goal a 50% reduction in chronic shelter users. This goal falls well short of what Canadians expected from the current Liberal government.

The national housing strategy must be more than announcements about previous investments. It must deliver the results and the promises made to Canadians by the current government. The government must move up federal funding, and next month's budget is an opportunity to show Canadians the government is serious about the housing crisis.

A safe, affordable place to call home is a fundamental human right. Therefore, I add this to my comments today. When will our laws reflect what was promised, and protect vulnerable Canadians? When will the current Liberal government match its talk with action and the dollars needed to truly launch a national housing strategy of consequence?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, the right to housing moves forward, and I can assure the member opposite we will have legislation before this House rises.

However, as the member calls for us to match talk with action, I would ask her why she ran for a party that did not even match the talk it talked. The party opposite promised to spend an extra \$10 million a year on homelessness across the country, and in its new housing policy it does not even mention the word "homeless". In fact, it offers tax breaks to millionaires in Vancouver as opposed to helping people on the street.

Additionally, when the party opposite talks about spending dollars, its platform, the platform on which she sought a seat in this House, promised zero dollars for new housing in the second, third and fourth year of an NDP government if it had won the last election. The only thing worse than moving slowly on housing would be for it to match its promise, its rhetoric and its commitment to housing.

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This government has not only delivered new dollars, more dollars than the NDP promised, but we have delivered them to real people in real housing need right now as we speak. I am proud of that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:13 p.m.)

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