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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of *O Canada*, led by the member for Kingston and the Islands.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

I READ CANADIAN DAY

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the first-ever I Read Canadian Day. This initiative was created as a collaboration among the Canadian Children's Book Centre; children's author and my good friend Eric Walters; the Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers; and the Ontario Library Association.

The goal is simple. We want people to buy, borrow, read and talk about Canadian books, whether they are in English, French or an indigenous language. They can be in print, e-format and accessible formats.

We are challenging the nation to read Canadian for 15 minutes today and to share their experience at their library, at their school, with their family and friends and on social media with #IReadCanadian.

This celebration of Canadian literature for young people will have a lifelong impact on Canadian youth and help transform an entire generation into lifelong learners.

RCMP HERITAGE CENTRE

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I invite everyone to come visit the RCMP Heritage Centre on the front lawn of the RCMP Academy, the Mounties' historic training facility in my home city of Regina, Saskatchewan. The mission of the RCMP Heritage Centre is to bring to life one of Canada's oldest

and most iconic stories, the story of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

This story of our Mounties is a national story. It belongs to everyone. Visitors to the RCMP Heritage Centre can explore a variety of interactive exhibits and rare historical artifacts that bring over a century of our RCMP history to life, from the formation of the North West Mounted Police in 1873 to the modern-day Mountie.

I would like to thank the many volunteers, donors and staff of the RCMP Heritage Centre, whose work continues to shed light on this important chapter of our shared history.

CHRISTIE BLATCHFORD

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just a few days ago, we lost Christie Blatchford, one of Canada's most prominent writers and journalists.

Born in the town of Rouyn-Noranda in northwestern Quebec, Christie wrote for the Toronto Star, the Toronto Sun, the National Post and the Globe and Mail. She broke down barriers for women in sports reporting. She became an award-winning author and a war and courtroom correspondent.

Christie always wrote with a unique balance of toughness and tenderness. From time to time, I had the privilege of debating the news of the day with Christie on Newstalk 1010 radio. She was relentless in her pursuit of the truth and the facts that would help us understand the issues we face every day. I respected that in her, but I also respected her courage to unabashedly share her point of view, even when it was controversial.

Maybe that is why Newstalk 1010 morning host John Moore recently said, "There are certain figures you turn to, to make sense of the world around you. She was one of those." I could not agree more.

It will be a lot harder making sense of the world around us without Christie.

[*Translation*]

HOOKED ON SCHOOL DAYS

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is the week we celebrate Hooked on School Days.

Statements by Members

This year's theme for Hooked on School Days is "Our Actions, A + in Their Success". This theme is meant to encourage everyone, including us parliamentarians, to do more to contribute to educational success.

I want to take this opportunity to salute the teachers and all school staff, including professionals and support staff, for the indispensable investment they put in day after day.

Having worked as a school principal for over 20 years, today I am thinking about the young students who sometimes struggle to make it through the school day.

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VALENTINE'S DAY

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 14, almost everyone here celebrated Valentine's Day in one way or another. Valentine's Day is not just for lovers. It is a time to share wishes of happiness, forgiveness and unity in order to bring joy, laughter and delight into the hearts of all human beings. Love is not looking at one another; it is looking together in the same direction.

[*English*]

It is an occasion to be reminded that to love is to care about each other, to be united and to make from our diversity a strong tie that holds us together forever and to make Canada even better, because better is always possible. No one is left behind in Canada; it is one for all and all for one.

[*Translation*]

Happy Valentine's Day to all Canadians and to all communities across Canada and throughout the world.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN ACADEMIC

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay respect to one of Canada's leading public intellectuals.

He is Edmonton-born and Fairview-raised, with an academic career spanning McGill, Harvard and finally the University of Toronto. He is a clinician by profession and, with over two million copies sold of his self-help book, one of Canada's best-selling authors.

He is comfortable quoting Jung, Nietzsche and Solzhenitsyn, and his Bible lectures have struck a nerve with a secular generation detached from its roots. It is said a nation's treasure is its scholars. Jordan B. Peterson is one of Canada's treasures.

Rule 10 is "be precise in your speech", so let me be judicious. During his talks, he used his words carefully, imparting wisdom for an introspective life.

His battle with depression reminds us that being sick does not mean one is weak. He went to rehab to treat his addiction to anti-anxiety medication after his wife Tammy's terminal cancer diagnosis. He spoke frankly of his autoimmune illness and the life changes he had to make. His most recent health setbacks are a reminder of our mortality, regardless of fame or fortune.

I invite all members to join me in wishing Dr. Jordan B. Peterson a speedy recovery.

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• (1410)

ALLAN PACE

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise in this House today to remember Al Pace, a community leader Cape Breton lost last week at 81 years of age.

Al was known for many things, and being a committed and loving family man was one of them. Al was a founding member of Sydco Fuels and Scotia Propane. He knew the importance of giving back to community. His work ethic and dedication never ceased. In fact, even after his retirement, he showed up every day for work.

Al served on many community boards, including the Kiwanis Club, the Shriners, the Cape Breton Regional Hospital Foundation and the United Way. He was the very embodiment of "a rising tide raises all ships".

On behalf of Cape Breton—Canso constituents and members of this House, I wish to offer my sincere condolences to his four generations of family and his loved ones. Al was an inspiration to all and will be deeply missed.

It is my hope that we can carry forward Al's virtue of putting community first for the betterment of the province, the region and our country.

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[*Translation*]

MARIE LAUZON

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce that Lachute artist Marie Lauzon has once again made her mark on the world stage.

Ms. Lauzon was awarded the bronze medal at the 50th international exhibit of the Cercle des artistes peintres et sculpteurs du Québec held last September at the Fontduche abbey near Cognac, France.

Her abstract piece entitled *Dévouement et détermination* charmed the jury, which was made up of prominent figures from the French cultural community.

Four more of Ms. Lauzon's abstract pieces are currently on display at the Palais des congrès de Montréal.

The people of Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation and I are proud of her. We are also proud of the positive attention she draws to our community. She is now part of my riding's ambassadors' circle.

Statements by Members

[English]

CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Day in Canada, which took place last week on February 14.

Congenital heart disease, or CHD, affects over 250,000 Canadians across our country. It is the world's leading birth defect, with roughly one in 90 Canadian children being diagnosed with some form of it each year, including holes in the heart, valve defects, stenosis of arteries and veins, and much more.

Thankfully, with technological and medical advancements, today about 90% of these children survive to adulthood. There is no cure for CHD, which means access to specialized care is essential, particularly for Canadian adults. Research on adult CHD has not reached the same level as other areas of heart disease, even though it has the potential to have a huge impact.

I encourage all Canadians to follow the mission of the Canadian Congenital Heart Alliance. We need to spread the word about the growing population of survivors and help them get the care and support they need to live long and healthy lives.

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FLORYNCE KENNEDY

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in celebration of Black History Month, I wish to honour Florynce Kennedy, a lawyer and a pioneer in the women's movement.

Flo has been neglected by history, including in her very important role in the legalization of abortion. There is no real acknowledgement of this black woman's extraordinary struggle in the fight for all women.

At a crucial time in the 1960s, using ideas from the Black Power movement, Flo shaped the feminist movement into what it is today. She organized protest and boycotts and fought pro bono for social justice issues in court.

Sixty years ago, Flo pinpointed what we only started speaking about recently: that the feminist movement cannot ignore interlocking forms of oppression. To no avail, Flo tried to organize interracial feminist organizations that would address these very critical issues.

She was one of the most vocal, blunt voices in the feminist and Black Power movements and once said:

There aren't too many people ready to die for racism. They'll kill for racism but they won't die for racism.

* * *

● (1415)

JOAN CARR

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour Joan Carr, Edmonton Catholic School superintendent, whom we lost to cancer this month.

Pioneering early learning programs, improving indigenous learning and helping new Canadians enter the school system were all part of Joan's 14 years as the head of Edmonton Catholic schools.

In 2017, Joan was recognized as Canada's top school superintendent. An elegant and attentive person, Joan never lost the heart of a teacher despite her exacting responsibilities as superintendent of more than 44,000 students. She modelled servant leadership to an extraordinary degree, empowering all those who worked for her to realize their talents, and focused always on supporting parents in their role as the primary educators of their children.

Joan was gifted with the support of her husband, Kevin Carr, himself a legend in educational leadership. She was the loving face of Jesus the teacher for all those she served. Well done, good and faithful servant. May she enter the glory of God.

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MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over 100,000 men and women in Alberta and Saskatchewan remain out of work. This crisis was created by the government's malicious indifference towards the energy sector.

However, there is hope on the horizon, in the name of a \$20-billion mining project that would see 7,000 direct jobs created and countless more in spinoff and support work. That is why it is so confusing that members of the Prime Minister's own caucus, and I will just point out two, the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Toronto—Danforth, are actively promoting a petition calling for the cancellation of this job-creating project.

These reckless actions will not only cost our country thousands of jobs, but will tarnish our country's reputation, again, as a place unwilling to move projects forward.

People in my riding of Regina—Lewvan are looking to the Prime Minister, hoping he will stand in his place today and promise thousands of western Canadians that his government will approve this job-creating project. The Teck Frontier project needs to be approved now. We are hoping the Prime Minister will not show the same weak leadership he showed in the House yesterday.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am scared.

Oral Questions

History has shown us, too many times, that when change happens, people all too often target who they see as “other”. When anyone defines a person or a group of people as “other than”, we forget the connection of our human family.

All people want an environment that sustains us. All people want safety for their community and their loved ones. All people want to be heard and seen for the realities they are experiencing. In my riding and across Canada, pressure is rising to address indigenous rights and title, to build an economy that will provide living wages while protecting the environment.

I am calling on all Canadians to put down the weapons of racist language. I am calling on all people to not be silent but to remind one another we can have a difference of opinion, but we should not spread hate.

As the mother of indigenous children and grandchildren, they are precious to me. I am calling on all of us to keep all of us safe.

* * *

• (1420)

[Translation]

EXPORAIL

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister gave the Minister of Canadian Heritage the mandate to review our national museums policy to ensure that people can access history.

My riding is home to Exporail, the only museum that specializes in railways. The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage recommended granting this museum national museum status in 2007, but nothing has happened since then.

A review of the legislation would be the perfect opportunity to pay tribute to everyone who worked on building our railways in Quebec and Canada.

The first meeting of that committee is taking place today, very soon in fact, and I wish the members a constructive first meeting. Above all, I hope they will remember that their country was built on its railroads.

As we have seen these past few days, rail transportation is still very important.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Canada was grappling with a crisis that, unfortunately, is only getting worse, the Prime Minister was off conducting a charm offensive to secure an African president's vote.

I would like to remind our Prime Minister that the foreign leader he met with is in favour of criminalizing homosexuality. Existing laws have been used to arrest members of the LGBTQ community visiting their loved ones in hospital, perpetrate severe local police brutality and justify denying access to medical treatment.

Our Prime Minister is prepared to use human rights as a bargaining chip in his bid to get a UN seat. That is alarming. He does not have a plan to resolve the ongoing rail transportation crisis.

He is supporting a foreign leader who violates LGBTQ rights. This is pure hypocrisy on the part of a two-faced man who does everything for show. Inconsistency is the Liberal government's trademark. It does not respect the environment, it wastes money and it sells LGBTQ rights.

* * *

[English]

KIN CANADA

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 100th anniversary of Kin Canada, the nation's largest all-Canadian service club organization. Over 6,000 members belong to more than 400 Kinsmen, Kinette and Kin clubs across Canada, dedicating themselves to serving the community's greatest need.

Since its founding by Hal Rogers in 1920, the association has contributed more than \$1 billion to Canadian causes, communities and individuals in need, as well as to disaster relief efforts beyond our borders.

Kin Canada's repertoire of good deeds includes supporting the fight against cystic fibrosis, having raised more \$47.6 million for research and patient care since 1964; awarding bursaries to Canadian students from coast to coast to coast; and spreading cheer on its national day of kindness.

I invite all members to join me in expressing our heartfelt gratitude to all of the inspiring individuals who uplift their communities in a spirit of co-operation, inclusiveness and compassion. I say thanks to Kin Canada.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “we must have coordinated action if we are going to call in police. There must be coordination with every province. A deadline must be set. I am not talking about weeks, but days...it is time for this to end. It has been two weeks.” Who said that? Quebec's premier, François Legault.

Did Mr. Legault disqualify himself with these comments from participating in future federal-provincial meetings?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take this crisis very seriously. It is unacceptable that so many Canadians are facing shortages or layoffs, as we have seen today. We know that we must do absolutely everything we can to resolve this worrisome issue peacefully. That is exactly what we will continue to do.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if it is an unacceptable situation, he should do something about it. After two weeks of the Prime Minister's inaction and weakness, CN Rail and VIA Rail have announced that they are laying off nearly 1,500 workers because of these non-stop blockades across Canada. There are 1,500 men and women who have to look their families in the eye and tell them that they were laid off. They still have bills to pay.

Can the Prime Minister tell them on what day the blockades will come down?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working extremely hard, doing absolutely everything we can to resolve these situations peacefully. We know that an overly aggressive approach, like the one proposed by the leader of the official opposition, will only lead to more challenges down the road.

However, I do agree with the Leader of the Opposition on one thing. This situation is unacceptable in the fact that it is hitting Canadians so hard, facing layoffs and shortages. That is why we are doing everything we can to resolve this peacefully. We will exhaust every effort to resolve this peacefully.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister still refuses to take any kind of action. These radical activists have erected these blockades because they want to shut down our resource centre. Protesters 4,000 kilometres away want to cancel billions of dollars' worth of resource projects, ones supported by the elected council of the Wet'suwet'en and even the British Columbia NDP government. This is not a way to grow the economy.

The Prime Minister is showing incredible weakness in refusing to do anything about this. Once again, can he tell people who were just laid off on what day they can get back to work?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to do everything we can to resolve this situation peacefully. That is what Canadians expect of their government.

We understand how difficult this is for so many people who are facing shortages and layoffs right now, but we know we need to resolve this in a way that will not create more problems months from now and over the coming years. That is why we are taking every step necessary to resolve this constructively, peacefully and rapidly.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are not doing everything. They could actually be moving to take these blockades down.

The reality is that the Prime Minister is trying to make a link between reconciliation and a group of radical protesters who have nothing to do with the first nations affected by this decision. These are groups whose self-professed goals are to shut down all development in our energy sector. They are anti-free market and they are ignoring the science of these approvals.

Oral Questions

Once again, will the Prime Minister take action and tell these out-of-work Canadians on what day they can return to work?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand this is an unacceptable situation. Canadians are hurting. Canadians are facing layoffs. This is something we need to resolve, and we need to resolve it not just for today and tomorrow, but for the weeks and months to come.

Unfortunately, the approach that the Leader of the Opposition is proposing would not ensure jobs and stability for Canadians in the future. That is why we, on this side of the aisle, are focused on resolving it peacefully. That is what we will do.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, only to the Prime Minister is standing up for the rule of law somehow aggressive behaviour from a government. It is the bare minimum that Canadians expect from their elected officials.

Yesterday there were suggestions that some of the blockades might come down if the RCMP withdrew from certain sites. When asked about this, the minister said that they were considering that.

Why is the government considering directing the RCMP not to uphold the law, but ruling out asking them to enforce the rule of law?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand that this is a very serious situation, one that holds the path of reconciliation, of partnerships on one hand and the other side—

The Speaker: I hate to interrupt the right hon. Prime Minister, but I am having a hard time hearing his answer.

I think we are ready. Please proceed. The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, of course this is the situation facing many Canadians who are dealing with shortages or dealing with challenges to their own disrupted lives, but also possible layoffs. That is why we are focused on real issues that will matter to Canadians, a real solution forward, not rhetorical games or playing short-term politics, as the members of the opposition continue to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the number of job losses is starting to snowball. In my riding, Beloeil—Chambly, business owners are contacting me to say that this is getting serious and we are heading for shortages.

Oral Questions

I invite those who want to understand the economic consequences to talk to the Premier of Quebec. The premier knows better than anyone that empty words do not change anything. He has expertise in the matter.

Each first nation has a leader. They want to know if Canada has one.

If the Prime Minister says he has opened a dialogue, then what is the nature of the open discussion forum?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to have direct discussions with the different leaders of the different indigenous groups. We acknowledge that there are several groups within the different indigenous groups and we are having as much discussion as possible. We recognize the complexity of the situation. It is a very difficult situation for business owners, for Canadians, for people who are dealing with layoffs. We will continue to work on resolving this situation as peacefully as possible.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that clarified anything.

If the government were to implement a solution, that is the first possibility that should be considered. We talked about the merits of having the RCMP withdraw from Wet'suwet'en territory, but obviously we cannot have a complete lack of police presence.

Has the government considered the possibility of asking the Wet'suwet'en to replace the RCMP, whose presence is seen as an act of aggression for obvious reasons, with an indigenous police force of their choice?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. That is one of the many options that we are currently thinking about and discussing with British Columbia. Obviously, that will be up to the police and the province, where the RCMP works as a provincial police force. That is exactly the type of thinking and discussion we are engaging in to peacefully resolve this situation.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is demonstrating a lack of leadership in this national crisis.

[English]

Instead of photo ops, people need concrete proposals to solve and de-escalate the situation. We have three proposals to help de-escalate the situation. First, the Prime Minister must meet with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. Second, the Prime Minister should appoint a special mediator to facilitate the conversation. Third, the RCMP needs to stand down to allow these conversations and dialogues to happen.

Will the Prime Minister meet with the hereditary chiefs and appoint a special mediator?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations has been engaged

closely with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary leadership and has indicated many times that she would be willing to meet with them at any given moment. The Wet'suwet'en are continuing to reflect on this, but we are impressing upon them the urgency with which they really need to engage in finding a path forward for the benefit of Canadians, indigenous and non-indigenous, who are being sorely affected by the shortages, the disruptions and indeed the layoffs.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has already spent \$4.5 billion to buy a pipeline, and expanding it could cost over \$13 billion.

A recent poll found that as costs rise, support plummets. That is because Canadians understand there are better ways to spend this public money.

Does the Prime Minister agree that there are better ways to invest this public money to create high-quality jobs and lower emissions?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we approved the Trans Mountain expansion project because it is in the public interest. We recognize that our society and our world depend on petroleum products. That is why we need to develop these resources responsibly and transport them in a safe and sustainable way. We also know that taking the profits from this extremely profitable pipeline and pouring them into the clean-energy transition is a positive way to keep fighting climate change.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the illegal blockades have been in place for over two weeks. This is a national crisis. Commuters cannot get to work, producers cannot get their goods to market and people are losing their jobs.

The Prime Minister's weak leadership has forced Premier Moe to convene a special meeting of all the provincial premiers to discuss a way forward.

Why is the Prime Minister abdicating his job to the premiers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased to speak with Premier Moe just minutes ago to talk about the work that we are doing all together at the federal and provincial levels to engage with a solution, to recognize that this is a challenge that has its origins in B.C. but has issues and repercussions right across the country upon which we must work together.

Every premier understands the need to resolve this quickly but peacefully, and that is what we are working on together.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were hoping the Prime Minister would present a plan yesterday to bring down the illegal blockades that are costing jobs, causing Canadians real hardship and also making a mockery of our laws. Instead they received weak and ineffective words.

Even the premiers are unimpressed with the Prime Minister's pathetic response. In fact, Premier Scott Moe has initiated an emergency call with other premiers to address the crisis.

When will the Prime Minister step up, do his job and put an end to these dangerous and illegal barricades?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, I was pleased to speak just minutes ago with Premier Moe to discuss the concerted approach by the federal and provincial governments to ensure that this national challenge is responded to both at regional levels and at the federal level.

We will continue to work to resolve this situation, which is extremely difficult for Canadians right across the country. We are all, premiers and Prime Minister, united in the fact that we need to resolve this quickly and peacefully.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the rail blockade crisis, the Prime Minister has demonstrated a lack of leadership that is frustrating Canadians and Quebec Premier François Legault. Mr. Legault said that the federal Liberal government is losing control and that we are on the verge of having serious problems.

The Prime Minister does not seem to understand the urgent need to act.

Will he do his job, show a little leadership and tell us when he will table his plan with a time frame?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect us to find a lasting solution to this situation, not just a short-term one. That is why we are working hard to resolve this situation peacefully. The solutions proposed by the Conservatives will only cause tensions to rise and jeopardize our economy in the coming months. We know that the way to support Canadians who are concerned about their jobs and their daily lives is to do everything in our power to try to resolve this situation peacefully.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we have a propane shortage in the middle of winter, Canada will have some serious problems.

Oral Questions

The government is doing nothing to reassure the 1,000 VIA Rail workers, the 450 CN workers and the 325 workers in Lac-Mégantic. It is doing nothing for the farmers and restaurant owners who are facing propane rationing.

Unlike the Liberal Prime Minister, who is choosing to ignore the disastrous impact of the blockades, the Quebec premier has responded, saying that an ultimatum is needed. He says we need to take action, and it must be in coordination with every province at the same time.

After such weak leadership yesterday, when will the Prime Minister acknowledge that his lack of leadership could cause thousands of job losses in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is precisely to avoid future instability, which could last months or even years, that we want to resolve this situation peacefully. The Conservatives want to elevate the temperature and go in forcefully. That is not a solution. We will work with the premiers, including Premier Legault, to resolve this situation peacefully. That is what Canadians expect.

[English]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the illegal rail blockades are yet another blockade and another barrier for Canadian grain farmers, and the situation is a crisis. There are 19 ships off Prince Rupert and another 50 ships off the port of Vancouver, many of them waiting to be loaded with grain. Every week that the rails are blockaded with illegal blockades costs Canadian farmers \$50 million. We are more than four weeks in, and Canadian farmers already hit with the Liberal carbon tax are seeing their bills mounting.

When will the Prime Minister safely remove these illegal blockades and get our commodities moving again?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our priority is resolving this situation peacefully, because we know that is the long-term solution that is needed for this country. It is essential that we work together across provinces to bring down the temperature and to bring down these barricades, but to do it in a way that is peaceful. That means concrete actions that are going to resolve this situation. That is what we are doing. The raising of the rhetoric and temperature by the members of the official opposition is not serving to help any of the Canadians who are facing layoffs or disruptions in their daily lives.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, protesters continue to shut down our railways, blockade our ports and target our border crossings. There have already been 1,500 workers laid off, and thousands more are at risk of losing their jobs. Reserve supplies of home heating oil, propane and chlorine for water treatment are running critically low, putting the health and safety of Canadians at risk.

Will the Prime Minister finally show some leadership and demand that the court injunctions against these illegal blockades be enforced, or will he continue to embolden the mob that is giving the courts the Trudeau salute?

• (1440)

The Speaker: I got up to point something out, but I realize that it was a historical reference. I will leave it at that; everyone knows why I got up.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are focused on helping the tens of thousands of Canadians who have had their lives disrupted, who are facing shortages and are facing layoffs. We will continue to work to help them both in the short term and in the long term by resolving this situation peacefully. We will continue to work to exhaust every option to resolve it peacefully, because we know this is a situation deeply concerning to Canadians right across the country.

The Speaker: On reflecting on that, I just want to remind the hon. members that the rules state that members cannot do indirectly what they cannot do directly.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matawâpédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the rail blockade was caused by the RCMP. It was the RCMP that sparked the conflict by ordering its officers to arrest peaceful Wet'suwet'en protesters. It was the RCMP that ordered its officers to use as much force as possible, including snipers, to break up the protests. Using snipers: I could not make this stuff up.

To resolve the crisis, will the Prime Minister—

The Speaker: I will have to interrupt the member for a few moments.

[*English*]

I am having a really hard time hearing the member at the other end, and the noise is getting rather loud.

[*Translation*]

I will let the member continue with her question.

The hon. member has the floor.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, to resolve the crisis, will the Prime Minister ask for the withdrawal of the RCMP from Wet'suwet'en territory and apologize for the RCMP's mistakes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity that the member is giving me to remind people that there is no provincial police force in British

Columbia. The RCMP serves as the provincial police, and in B.C. it is the equivalent of the Ontario Provincial Police or the Sûreté du Québec. It is the province's responsibility to monitor the RCMP's conduct. The RCMP was acting in the capacity of a provincial police force in this case.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the rail blockade crisis is getting worse by the second.

I was stunned to hear the minister say yesterday that she planned to meet with the Wet'suwet'en protesters by the end of the month. We do not have weeks, or even days, to spare. We have hours.

We need action now.

Will the Prime Minister ask her to call a meeting immediately?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations is ready to meet with the Wet'suwet'en leaders any time. The challenge is that the Wet'suwet'en leaders are not ready to meet with us.

We will keep working to arrange that meeting. We are doing everything we can to resolve this situation peacefully, and we are going to keep exploring different approaches.

On our side, there is a willingness to resolve this peacefully and rapidly.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the information of the Prime Minister and all members of the House, the government has the power to give instructions to the RCMP.

After initially denying it, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness finally admitted it in the House yesterday.

The illegal blockades must end, but that will take leadership, a quality that the Prime Minister is sorely lacking.

When will he tell his public safety minister to put an end to this national crisis?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, it might be a good idea to get the facts straight.

The blockade near Belleville is the responsibility of the Ontario Provincial Police. Naturally, we are coordinating between the federal police and the provincial police on the work they will do.

However, neither the federal government nor any other government has the right to order the police around in a democracy like ours.

• (1445)

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Public Safety conceded that under the RCMP Act, he does in fact have the authority to provide direction to the RCMP.

Will the Prime Minister finally show some real leadership and instruct his public safety minister to direct the RCMP to enforce the law and safely end these illegal blockades?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, politicians do not order the police around in operational matters. That is a well-established principle in our democracy.

We are working with all partners across the country to resolve this situation peacefully and rapidly. That is what Canadians expect, because Canadians are hurting. From disruptions to shortages to layoffs, this situation is unacceptable, and that is why we are doing everything we can to resolve it as quickly as possible.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, ironically, now says that he does not order police officers around. That will be news to Mark Norman.

Today at the finance committee, I asked the finance minister, who is supposed to be in charge of the money, how much these illegal blockades are costing the Canadian economy every day. He did not know. Does the Prime Minister?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that this is a time of hardship for Canadians with shortages, with disruptions in their daily lives as commuters and with layoffs as well. This is a situation that needs to end. It needs to end peacefully, but it needs to end quickly, and the approach that we are taking is to look to resolve this situation in a peaceful manner so that we do not continue to see disruptions like this in the coming months and years.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, then the Prime Minister, like his finance minister, does not know how much this illegal blockade is costing our Canadian economy in terms of dollars.

We know today that 1,500 rail workers have lost their jobs. They went home and looked their families in the eye and said, “I lost my job.”

Can the Prime Minister tell us how many Canadians across the country in total have lost their jobs so far as a result of these illegal blockades?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, far too many Canadians are facing disruptions, facing shortages, and yes, facing layoffs as well. This is the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister. I think we are ready.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the very real challenges and suffering faced by Canadians in this situation are why we are so resolved to solve this situation peacefully and quickly. This is something that we need to resolve for stability and the opportunities for Canadians across this country. That is what we will absolutely do.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our country and the government are facing a crisis. The

Oral Questions

Prime Minister tells us that no relationship is more important to him than that with indigenous peoples, but the protests we are seeing tell us that indigenous people have had enough of the government's empty promises. The Wet'suwet'en people have been patient. They waited decades for the federal government to meet with them in good faith on the question of their title and rights.

Will the Prime Minister travel to Wet'suwet'en territory and personally sit down with the hereditary chiefs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs have been engaged closely with the province on issues of title and rights. That table is proceeding in a very positive way. They have also engaged directly with the federal government on issues of child and family services in very fruitful discussions over the past few years.

We will continue to engage with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs, and indeed with all indigenous leaders across this country on the path to reconciliation, but also to look to resolve this current difficult situation for Canadians.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's pipe dream is a nightmare for both the environment and the economy. With the Trans Mountain expansion, the Liberals gave the largest gift to an oil company in Canadian history, and the costs just keep going up. Now the finance minister will not even say how much is too much.

We know that as the costs for TMX skyrocket, opposition to it grows too, so when will the Liberals come clean about the full cost of this pipeline and when will they admit that they were wrong to buy it in the first place?

● (1450)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is in the national interest. Getting our resources to markets other than the United States is a positive thing for our economy, a positive thing for workers across the country and indeed a positive thing for consumers and taxpayers across the country as well.

It is also going to be helpful in our transition and in our fight against climate change, as all the profits from the extremely profitable pipeline that will be built will be poured into the clean-energy transition and invested in green solutions. That is how to manage the path forward responsibly for Canadians.

*Oral Questions***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the veteran and family well-being fund is a crucial tool that our government has introduced that helps veterans, their families and veteran organizations across Canada. This program provides grants and contributions to organizations to conduct research and implement projects that support the well-being of veterans and their families, and it will have a lasting impact on the veteran community.

Can the Prime Minister tell us about recent projects our government has funded through this important program?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Charlottetown for his question and for his hard work on behalf of Canadian veterans.

We announced the investment of \$400,000 for Operation Entrepreneur, which will help veterans get the skills and supports they need to get started in business as they transition to civilian life.

We have also announced an investment of \$400,000 to Good Shepherd Ministries to support homeless veterans and those at risk of becoming homeless.

We are working to ensure that Canadian veterans and their families are receiving the skills and support they so deeply need and deserve.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives stand with the Wet'suwet'en people. When it comes to Coastal GasLink, the Wet'suwet'en elected chief and councillors support this project. We recognize that self-determination and economic independence are important steps—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

It is pretty bad when I cannot hear the question and the heckling is coming from both sides.

The hon. member will please continue.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, we recognize that self-determination and economic independence are important steps on the path to reconciliation.

Can the Prime Minister explain how allowing activists to block the independent decision-making power of indigenous Canadians supports reconciliation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reconciliation does not mean deciding who speaks for indigenous communities. It is respecting their own leadership and respecting their disagreements within their communities as we work with them constructively.

The members opposite want to pick and choose who speaks for indigenous communities. That is the broken way of governments past. We need to start from a place of respect and self-government, and that is what, on this side of the House, we understand. Unfortu-

nately, it is the last thing that the people on the other side of the aisle understand.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister think he actually knows more about what is best for indigenous Canadians than they do themselves?

The Coastal GasLink project will create hundreds of jobs, inject millions of investment into the local economy and provide a path to prosperity for the communities affected. We are talking about providing the hope of a better future. Instead of platitudes and empty promises, when will the Prime Minister support true reconciliation and allow indigenous Canadians to prosper by participating in the LNG project?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to be able to stand beside Premier Horgan a number of years ago and announce the largest private sector investment in Canada's history for LNG Canada. We understand the benefits that go to indigenous communities, and that is why we continue to move forward on that path.

At the same time, it would be a grave error for the Conservatives to continue to think that they can pick and choose who speaks for indigenous Canadians. We will continue to engage with a broad range of indigenous leadership and respect their choice in terms of leadership.

* * *

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is funny to hear the Prime Minister talking about leadership because he has done everything but show leadership over the past two weeks.

All across the country, Canadians are suffering and business owners are in trouble. We spoke this morning with one of my constituents, Jean-François Bergeron, who is the CEO of Capital Propane. The situation is worse than in November. He had to cut services to his clients by 60%. Thirty new propane buses are sitting idle.

If the Prime Minister refuses to answer the official opposition, can he tell Mr. Bergeron when the blockades will come down?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I completely understand the concerns many Canadians have about shortages and layoffs.

We know that we need to put an end to this situation, but we need to resolve it peacefully. The overly aggressive approach the opposition is proposing will not resolve the challenges being faced by Mr. Bergeron and others.

We will always work peacefully to resolve this situation as best we can and as quickly as possible.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says “peacefully and rapidly”.

The Prime Minister has done absolutely nothing about this for two weeks, yet he has the nerve to use the word “rapidly”. Unfortunately, I will have to tell Mr. Bergeron that we have not received an answer to his question.

I do have another very simple question for the Prime Minister though. As the leader of the government of a nation governed by the rule of law, can he tell me one simple thing: Are the blockades illegal?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly the situation before us is unacceptable. It is illegal to block rail lines, but resolving this situation is not as simple as the opposition would have it.

We cannot use force to make the situation go away. We have to resolve this situation peacefully so that it does not resurface in the months and years to come. That is our focus. That is what we are choosing to do, and those are the measures we are taking every day.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am confused. I hope the Prime Minister can help me. If I understood his response to my colleague correctly just now, the Prime Minister of Canada, who travels the world to get a seat on the UN Security Council, who is the indigenous peoples' best friend ever, apparently called the Wet'suwet'en leaders, and they told him they did not want to see him. I find that unbelievable.

Did the Prime Minister really say that the Wet'suwet'en refused to have a meeting with him, the Prime Minister of Canada? If not, when is the meeting?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have worked to arrange meetings between the Wet'suwet'en and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations. Unfortunately, they are not available for a meeting at this time. That is why we are working on arranging this meeting. We will continue to work to resolve this situation peacefully and rapidly.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am almost speechless, but not quite.

The Prime Minister answers questions as if he were still in opposition. He criticizes economic problems, cuts and supply shortages. He admits this is illegal. We respond by telling him that he is the Prime Minister, not us. We ask him to talk to them, but he says they are not interested.

Is there a leadership problem?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to resolve this situation in a reasonable way, but—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we are taking concrete steps to resolve this situation, and that includes meetings between the ministers and the representatives of the Wet'suwet'en. We

know that the process is moving too slowly for many Canadians who are facing shortages and layoffs. We are going to keep doing everything we can to resolve this peacefully.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, because of the illegal blockades, CN Rail has had to lay off 500 workers. VIA has just announced 1,000 layoffs. In making that announcement, the VIA Rail CEO said, “In 42 years of existence, it is the first time that VIA...has to interrupt most of its services”. It is all because of the Prime Minister's lack of action and weak leadership.

How many more Canadian jobs have to be lost before he does his job and actually takes firm action?

• (1500)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the forceful solutions proposed by the members opposite will not result in better economic stability or better opportunities for Canadians. We know that the only path forward is to exhaust every possibility to resolve this situation peacefully, and that is exactly what we will stay focused on doing. Elevating the temperature and going in forcefully is not going to solve this before we have resolved every step peacefully first.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, job losses from these illegal blockades are growing by the hour. Last night, CN Rail announced 450 workers will be laid off. Today, VIA Rail announced another 1,000. When Canadian workers and families have their livelihoods and safety put at risk, the Prime Minister offers nothing but platitudes.

If these illegal rail blockades continue, Atlantic Canada will run out of propane, airports will run out of the de-icing fluids that keep us moving in the winter and water treatment facilities will soon lack chemical supplies that keep our drinking water safe.

When will the government finally stand up for Atlantic Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we do not exhaust every possibility of resolving this situation peacefully, the disruptions to the Canadian economy and to hard-working Canadians and their jobs from coast to coast could be massive and could last over the coming months.

That is why we are focused on resolving this situation peacefully and rapidly. We will continue to do everything we can to do that, including engaging directly with different indigenous leaders.

Oral Questions

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's weak leadership is hurting Nova Scotia. Acadian Seaplants, which employs over 400 people in my riding, has run out of propane and cannot ship its products to market. Autoport in Eastern Passage, which handles thousands of cars for the North American market and employs dozens of people, issued layoff notices. Even Royal Propane in Digby, a small business in West Nova that employs about 40 people supplying products, had to issue layoffs.

How many more jobs must be lost before the Prime Minister acts?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, resolving this situation peacefully is the way we need to stay focused to get through this situation. The forceful responses that the opposition is proposing would not make things better for those workers or for their region. It would make things worse for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. That is why we are exhausting every possibility to resolve this peacefully.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoynes, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is an attractive place for African countries that are drawn by its bilingualism, its economic opportunities and its many top-notch institutions of higher learning. Last week the Prime Minister and many of his ministers were in Africa to develop new business opportunities.

Could the Prime Minister please update the House on the actions our government is taking to expand trade between Ethiopia and Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoynes for her question and her hard work.

Expanding and diversifying trade between Canada and fast-growing African economies is a priority for our government. Trade between Canada and Ethiopia totalled \$170 million in 2018.

We announced that we will be entering into negotiations towards a foreign investment promotion and protection agreement with Ethiopia, which will help further increase trade and investments for businesses in both countries.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just said he was going to resolve this in the coming months. The forestry industry in B.C. is in crisis. Two dozen mills have closed down and 10,000 workers' jobs have been impacted. Now we have blockades. Fifty per cent of the product goes to mills by rail.

The Prime Minister's weak leadership is going to lead to more layoffs and more hardship in my communities. When will the Prime Minister end the blockades?

• (1505)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working every day to resolve this situation peacefully and rapidly. The concern is, if we were to take the forceful proposals by the Conservatives, we would actually extend the challenges faced by the Canadian economy by many months and possibly years.

We need to exhaust every effort to resolve this peacefully. That is the best way to support workers across this country, businesses and indeed Canadians who are worried about those layoffs.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago, the Prime Minister told my colleague that it is illegal to block railways.

Can the Prime Minister tell us when he will direct his minister to enforce the law?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are doing everything we can to resolve this situation peacefully. We recognize that this is an extremely difficult situation for many Canadians facing layoffs. We will do everything we can to resolve this unacceptable situation rapidly.

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Prime Minister talked about force, but the force that is required today is a strength of conviction from him to be a leader and put an end to this crisis, not the weak embarrassment that we have seen on display for the last two weeks. He must understand that enforcing the rule of law is his duty and that it is an inherent act of peace.

How long is he going to let this continue for? A week? A month? A year? Forever?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the job of the prime minister is to stand up for Canadians and protect them and their livelihoods today and well into the future. It is that that drives this government—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the job of a prime minister is to stand up for Canadians today, tomorrow, next month and next year. That is what we are focused on, and that is why searching for a peaceful resolution to this situation is the right path forward.

[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is deeply concerned about the suffering of the Venezuelan people and remains firmly committed to promoting and protecting democracy and human rights.

In response to the attacks by the Nicolás Maduro regime against the rights of Venezuelans, Canada imposed several series of targeted sanctions. We have condemned the systematic violations of human rights committed by the illegitimate Maduro regime.

Can the Prime Minister inform the House of the measures the government has taken to ensure international action in favour of the Venezuelan people and interim President Juan Guaidó?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Châteauguay—Lacolle for her question and her hard work.

Last month, I met with interim President Juan Guaidó here in Ottawa. We congratulated the Venezuelan people for their continued tenacity in promoting democracy and human rights.

Tomorrow, we are proud to host the meeting of ministers of foreign affairs of the Lima Group. We will continue to push for fair elections in Venezuela. We encourage the international community to work together to address the humanitarian and democratic crisis inflicted by the illegitimate president, Nicolás Maduro.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals are failing to de-escalate the growing crisis across this country, they are creating another one for working people in my province. In Alberta alone, 19,000 people have lost their jobs in the last month.

Jason Kenney's policies and cuts are hurting Albertans, but so is the current government in its refusal to deliver on its promises.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member can continue, please.

• (1510)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, Jason Kenney's policies and cuts are hurting Albertans, but so is the government's refusal to deliver on its promises. The Liberals are failing on reconciliation. They are failing on the environment. They are failing on diversifying the economy and supporting Alberta workers.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, workers in Alberta have faced a very difficult few years. We are conscious of that. That is why we have worked to build the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, which will allow access to new markets, something that Alberta has long asked for but was unable to be delivered by the previous government. On top of that, we have invested in significantly more infrastructure projects over the past five years than the Conservatives did over 10 years.

Business of Supply

We will continue to invest in ways that benefit Alberta and indeed the entire country because when one part of the country is facing difficulties, Canadians stand with it. That is what we are doing with Alberta.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SPECIAL EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE SICKNESS BENEFITS

The House resumed from February 18 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:10 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, February 18, 2020, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Beloeil—Chambly relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1520)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 14)

YEAS

Members

Aboultair	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Angus
Arnold	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benzen
Bergen	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blaikie
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boudrias
Boulerice	Bragdon
Brassard	Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings	Carrie
Chabot	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chiu
Chong	Collins
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duval
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fortin	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Godin
Gourde	Gray

Business of Supply

Green	Hallan	Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Harder	Hoback	Fergus	Fillmore
Hughes	Jansen	Finnigan	Fisher
Johns	Julian	Fonseca	Fortier
Kelly	Kent	Fragiskatos	Freeland
Kitchen	Kniec	Garneau	Gerretsen
Kram	Kurek	Gould	Guilbeault
Kusie	Kwan	Hajdu	Hardie
Lake	Larouche	Holland	Housefather
Lawrence	Lehoux	Hussen	Hutchings
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)	Iacono	Jaczek
Liepert	Lloyd	Joly	Jones
Lukiwski	MacGregor	Jordan	Jowhari
MacKenzie	Maguire	Kelloway	Khalid
Manly	Martel	Khera	Koutrakis
Masse	Mathysen	Kusmierczyk	Lalonde
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier	Lametti	Lamoureux
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean	Lattanzio	Lauzon
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McPherson	Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Melillo	Michaud	Levitt	Lightbound
Moore	Morantz	Long	Longfield
Morrison	Motz	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Nater	Normandin	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Patzer	Paul-Hus	Martinez Ferrada	McCrimmon
Pauzé	Perron	McDonald	McGuinty
Plamondon	Qaqqaq	McKay	McKenna
Rayes	Redekopp	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Reid	Rempel Garner	Mendès	Medicino
Richards	Rood	Miller	Monsef
Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Morneau	Morrissey
Saroya	Savard-Tremblay	Murray	Ng
Scheer	Schmale	O'Connell	Oliphant
Seeback	Shields	O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor
Shin	Shipley	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Simard	Singh	Ratansi	Regan
Soroka	Stanton	Robillard	Rodriguez
Steinley	Ste-Marie	Rogers	Sahota (Brampton North)
Strahl	Stubbs	Saini	Sajjan
Sweet	Thériault	Samson	Sangha
Therrien	Tochor	Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Trudel	Uppal	Schiefke	Schulte
Van Popta	Vecchio	Serré	Sgro
Vidal	Viersen	Shanahan	Sheehan
Vignola	Vis	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Wagantall	Warkentin	Sikand	Simms
Waugh	Webber	Sorbara	Spengemann
Williamson	Wilson-Raybould	Tabbara	Tassi
Wong	Yurdiga	Trudeau	Turnbull
Zimmer — 169		Van Bynen	van Koeverden
		Vandal	Vandenbeld
		Vaughan	Virani
		Weiler	Wilkinson
		Yip	Young
		Zahid	Zann
		Zuberi — 149	

NAYS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bessette	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blois	Bratina
Brière	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cormier	Dabrusin
Damoff	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury

PAIRED

Members

Marcil
 May (Cambridge)— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by nine minutes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, three reports of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group.

The first report concerns the 72nd annual meeting of the Council of State Governments-West, held in Big Sky, Montana, United States, from July 16 to 20, 2019.

The second report concerns the 74th annual meeting of the Mid-western Legislative Conference of Council of State Governments, held in Chicago, Illinois, from July 21 to 24, 2019.

The third report concerns the 59th Annual Meeting and Regional Policy Forum of the Council of State Governments, Eastern Regional Conference, held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S., from July 28 to 31, 2019.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, three reports of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, the APF.

The first report is respecting its participation at the meeting of the Cooperation and Development Committee of the APF, held in Cambodia, from May 3 to 5, 2019.

The second report is with respect to its participation at the meeting of the Political Committee of the APF, held in Djibouti, on March 5 and 6, 2019.

The third and final report is on its participation at the meeting of the Parliamentary Network on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria of the APF, held in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, on November 18 and 19, 2019.

* * *

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the second report later this day.

Routine Proceedings

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-207, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (presentence report).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise today to reintroduce my private member's bill as the member of Parliament for Richmond Hill. The bill would amend paragraph 721(3)(a) of the Criminal Code. I would also like to thank the hon. member for Mississauga—Erin Mills for once again seconding the bill.

The bill would mandate that alongside such information as age, character, behaviour and willingness to make amends, information outlining mental health disorders and available mental health care programs for accused be provided in a pre-sentence report, unless otherwise specified. Access to such information is vital to ensuring that Canadians with histories of mental illness are afforded care, compassion and appropriate treatment throughout the process of their rehabilitation.

I urge all members of the House to support the bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-208, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (transfer of small business or family farm or fishing corporation).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to introduce my private member's bill, an act to amend the Income Tax Act regarding the transfer of small businesses or family farms or fishing corporations. This legislation would level the playing field for small businesses, family farms or fishing corporation owners when transferring their operation to a family member.

Currently, when a person sells his or her business to a family member, the difference between the sale price and the original purchase price is deemed to be a dividend. However, if this business is sold to a non-family member, it is considered a capital gain, which is taxed at a lower rate and allows the seller to use his or her lifetime capital gains exemption.

The bill would allow small businesses, family farms and fishing corporations the same tax rate when selling their operations to their family member as they would selling it to a third party.

I encourage all members to support this bill to promote sustainable small business succession, enhance opportunities for entrepreneurship and end the inequitable taxation of those transferring a small business, farm or fishing corporation to a family member.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

Routine Proceedings

● (1530)

COPYRIGHT ACT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP) moved for leave to introduce C-209, An Act to amend the Copyright Act (Crown copyright).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to reintroduce my bill which proposes to amend the Copyright Act. In particular, section 12 would be dropped, and replaced by “Without prejudice to any rights or privileges of the Crown, no copyright subsists in any work that is, or has been, prepared or published by or under the direction or control of Her Majesty or any government department.”

As things stand now, the government has a closed door when it comes to government publications, research and a number of published periodicals. This costs taxpayers a significant amount of money. It is against open government and is based upon a law that Canada enacted in 1921, which was based on a law from 1911 in the U.K.

Therefore, the bill would save money for taxpayers, it would provide open government for educators and innovators, and it would bring accountability. Most importantly, the bill would bring Canada in line with so many other countries that have information available for business or civil society for national advancement.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY ACT

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-210, An Act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act (organ and tissue donors).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to reintroduce my private member's bill that I had originally introduced in the previous parliamentary session.

Last year, the bill passed unanimously through all stages in the House in just 25 sitting days. Unfortunately, it died on the Order Paper at second reading in the Senate when the election was called. I am here, once again, to introduce this bill.

There are approximately 4,600 Canadians currently awaiting a life-saving organ transplant. While 90% of Canadians approve of organ and tissue donation, only about 20% of Canadians actually have registered consent with their provincial or territorial registries. This is an absolutely unacceptable number, and this is where we can help as parliamentarians.

My bill would assist Canadian provinces and territories in growing and maintaining their organ and tissue donor registries. The bill is simple. It would ask Canadians on their annual income tax return if they consent to having their provincial or territorial government be informed of their desire to be added to their organ and tissue donor registry. It is that simple: a question of consent on the income tax form.

Currently, the Canada Revenue Agency prohibits the use of the income tax form for any purpose other than the administration of

taxes. In order to allow for a question regarding organ and tissue donation on the tax form, a legal exemption must be created.

This was done once before on the tax form so that Elections Canada could ask Canadians for updated contact information. Again, what I am proposing is that a simple question of organ and tissue donation be placed on the tax form alongside the Elections Canada question.

I want to thank the hon. member for Calgary Shepard for seconding my bill, and also the 20 members of Parliament from all the parties in the House who have officially seconded my bill in a remarkable display of parliamentary co-operation.

I ask all members of the House to pick up the torch and consider passing this bill again with the same amount of enthusiasm, so that we can help save the lives of hundreds of Canadians.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1535)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the second report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: 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)

* * *

PETITIONS

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present four petitions in the House today.

The first petition deals with proposed legislation that was discussed in the last Parliament, and we now have a similar bill proposed to the Senate in this Parliament. In the last Parliament, it was Bill S-240. In this Parliament, it is Bill S-204, and it seeks to combat the scourge of forced organ harvesting and trafficking by making it a criminal offence for a Canadian to go abroad to receive an organ without consent of the donor.

It would also create mechanisms by which someone could be deemed inadmissible to Canada because of their involvement in organ harvesting and trafficking.

The petitioners are in support of this concept and of the bill.

AFGHAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights the particular challenges faced by the Sikh and Hindu minorities in Afghanistan. It is a long-standing call to action by members of those communities here in Canada for the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to use the powers granted to him to create a special program to help persecuted minorities in Afghanistan to be privately sponsored by communities to come to Canada.

The petition further urges the Minister of Foreign Affairs to raise the persecution faced by these communities with her Afghan counterpart and to strongly advocate for more to be done to protect them.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition highlights specifically the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China. The petitioners call for more to be done by this Parliament and by the government to combat this gross violation of fundamental human rights.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition highlights challenges faced by the Pakistani Christian community as a result of the blasphemy laws and other conditions in Pakistan, and the abuse of those laws as well to target minorities. In particular, the petitioners highlight Pakistani Christian asylum seekers in Thailand and their challenges as the result of detention, crackdowns, inhumane conditions, etc.

The petitioners urge the Government of Canada to take up this matter urgently with the Government of Thailand, to call for protection and humane treatment for Pakistani asylum seekers, and to allow them to apply for refugee status with the UNHCR and for resettlement without fear of being arrested, detained or deported.

[*Translation*]

EROSION PROTECTION

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition calling on the government to restore a program to protect the banks of the St. Lawrence River. The government has abdicated this responsibility for more than 20 years at the expense of those living along the river who have been severely impacted by erosion.

This petition echoes another petition that was presented in the last Parliament. Unfortunately, in addition to refusing to meet with

Routine Proceedings

those living along the river who travelled to Ottawa for the occasion, the Minister of Transport added insult to injury by not tabling a response to the petition. As a result of the election, we were unable to follow up with the Speaker of the House in order to have the minister's response to this petition.

I hope that the hon. Minister of Transport will be more respectful of the petitioners and will provide a response that is as positive as possible.

• (1540)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Saturday, February 22, will mark the one-year anniversary of the Algerian uprising, when Algerians started taking to the streets to demand democratic reforms, more justice, more freedom and respect for human rights. Once a week, millions of Algerians fill the streets to protest for those rights. Sadly, they are met with repression from an authoritarian regime that arrests people just for expressing an opinion, chanting a slogan or waving an Amazigh flag, a Berber flag. We believe that is totally unacceptable.

Hundreds of people have signed this petition calling for an end to the repression. The petition calls upon the House to urge the release of all prisoners of conscience and political prisoners in Algeria and to condemn systemic human rights violations in Algeria, as a Parliament, as supporters of democracy, and as citizens of Quebec and Canada.

[*English*]

YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition signed by 1,281 Canadians.

After 14-year-old Devan Selvey's murder in Hamilton, Ontario, which was the result of continuous and unaddressed bullying, and since 1977 both the number and rate of youth aged 12 to 17 years accused of homicide has risen 41%, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to immediately and thoroughly review the Youth Criminal Justice Act and make the appropriate amendments to stem the tide of increasing violence.

Routine Proceedings

OPIOIDS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today with a petition. It is an e-petition, which strangely now omits the addresses of the people. I would love to know where the petitioners were from, but I am proud to present their petition.

It calls on the government to name the overdose crisis what it is in this country, a public health emergency, and to take the kinds of steps that are required based on evidence. The petitioners are concerned that we take a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach; recognize that the opioid crisis is primarily a health issue, not a criminal issue; and listen to experts and front-line workers and decriminalize drugs in Canada.

PACIFIC HERRING FISHERY

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise to table a petition on behalf of Denman, Hornby and Lasqueti islanders, as well as residents of Qualicum Beach, Parksville and Courtenay. They are calling on the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to suspend the 2020 Salish Sea herring fishery until a whole-of-ecosystem plan is in place, to fairly compensate local fishers for economic losses they might incur and to ensure decisions are made with the full participation of first nations and local communities.

The petitioners are highlighting that Pacific herring is the basis of the food web that supports Pacific wild salmon, killer and humpback whales, cod and halibut, sea birds and other interdependent species on the Pacific coast. The reason they are concerned is that herring dropped approximately one-third between 2016 and 2019. The unexpected drop in herring in 2019 was due to overfishing.

The petitioners are calling on the government to take action. I brought this issue up with the minister just yesterday.

• (1545)

IRAN

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am tabling two petitions.

The first is from my constituents regarding Ukrainian International Airlines flight 752. They remind the House that 176 people, including 57 Canadians, were killed in this atrocity. They blame this horrible atrocity on the Iranian regime alone. They remind the House that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is responsible for terrorist attacks all across the Middle East. They remind the Government of Canada that it has an obligation to ensure that Iran is held accountable and the families of the victims receive the justice they deserve.

The petitioners are asking for the government to immediately implement the Conservative motion passed by Parliament in 2018 to list Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization, that fair compensation be paid to the families and that the Iranian government and the Canadian government ensure the repatriation of the remains.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition is also from petitioners in my riding.

The petitioners are drawing the attention of the House to the fact that on May 30, 2019, Alberta Premier Jason Kenney kept his campaign promise and gave Albertans the largest tax break in Alberta history by repealing the punishing NDP carbon tax. Therefore, they are asking the Government of Canada to scrap the leftover federal carbon tax that has been imposed on Albertans as of January 1, 2020.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions today.

The first petition is calling on the House of Commons to create a citizens' assembly on electoral reform and require the citizens' assembly to complete its work within 12 months and adopt any recommended changes to our electoral system before the next federal election.

An Angus Reid poll found that 85% of respondents supported the citizens' assembly to deliberate on electoral reform and deal with the distorted results from our recent federal election. For example, one Green Party MP represents 378,000 voters and one Liberal MP represents 37,000 voters.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, the second petition I want to table to today is regarding Falun Gong adherents. The petitioners are asking that we pass a resolution to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime's crime of systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs, amend Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting and publicly call for an end to persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I believe the hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View has a question of privilege.

PRIVILEGE

RESPONSE BY NATURAL RESOURCES MINISTER TO ORDER PAPER QUESTION

Mr. Earl Dreesen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege regarding a deliberately misleading statement presented to the House by the Minister of Natural Resources.

I asked the minister, on December 5, 2019, if his department had granted any contracts to the Pembina Institute since January 1, 2017. This request was made through written Question No. 50.

The minister's answer was:

Natural Resources Canada, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the Canada Energy Regulator, and the Northern Pipeline Agency have not granted any contracts to the Pembina Institute since January 1, 2017.

If you look online, Mr. Speaker, at the government's proactive disclosure report available through the open government portal, it lists eight contracts, all awarded by the Department of Natural Resources, and all awarded to the Pembina Institute since January 1, 2017.

I am sure you are aware, Mr. Speaker, of the ruling of Speaker Jerome on December 6, 1978. Speaker Jerome found a prima facie question of privilege after the member for Northumberland—Durham was assured by the solicitor general that as a matter of policy, the RCMP did not intercept the private mail of anyone.

In testimony before the McDonald commission, the former commissioner of the RCMP stated that they did indeed intercept mail on a very restricted basis and that the practice was not one which had been concealed from ministers. The member claimed that this statement clearly conflicted with the information he had received from the then solicitor general some years earlier.

The response by the Minister of Natural Resources to my written question claimed that no contracts had been granted to the Pembina Institute since January 1, 2017. That same minister then provided conflicting information online, as I stated earlier.

Another example of a prima facie case involving conflicting information provided by a minister can be found at pages 8581-2 of the Debates of February 1, 2002. The Speaker was concerned that despite the fact that the Minister of National Defence stated that he had no intention of misleading the House, contradictory statements were made by the minister, and the records were left with two different versions of events.

On March 9, 2011, the Speaker considered a matter where it was alleged that the minister of international co-operation made misleading statements in committee and the House. The Speaker noted that a standing committee had made material available that could be measured against other material, including statements in the House and answers to oral and written questions. He said that the statements made by the minister had, at the very least, caused confusion. He then decided to allow the member to propose his motion to the House referring to recent precedent and mindful of a ruling by Speaker Jerome to the effect that in case of doubt on a question, the Speaker should leave it to the House to decide.

Privilege

I point out that this is not a simple matter of the government just deciding not to give an answer to a written question, but a matter of a minister deciding to deliberately deny an answer by providing the wrong answer to the House while at the same time exposing this deception by providing the real answer elsewhere.

On December 16, 1980, at page 5797 of Hansard, the Speaker ruled:

While it is correct to say that the government is not required by our rules to answer written or oral questions, it would be bold to suggest that no circumstances could ever exist for a prima facie question of privilege to be made where there was a deliberate attempt to deny answers to an hon. member....

Before I conclude my remarks, I want to touch on the question of privilege raised by the member for Timmins—James Bay yesterday, because it is relevant to my question of privilege. The member argued that the information he received from the Minister of Justice regarding the legal costs of fighting indigenous children at the Human Rights Tribunal was misleading and that the minister should be held in contempt of the House.

The member brought to the attention of the Speaker other information provided by the minister to another source that was significantly different from the answer he received through his written question.

● (1550)

The member also asked the Speaker to apply the test used by Speakers laid out on page 85 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which clearly states:

...when it is alleged that a Member is in contempt for deliberately misleading the House: one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement, the Member intended to mislead the House....

I want to go on record as supporting the hon. member's question of privilege and let him know that I share his frustration with a government that consistently displays a dismissive attitude toward Parliament and its members, a course that ought to be corrected in the early days of this Parliament. One way to do that is to allow this matter to be considered by the members of the House.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to measure the content of the answer given by the Minister of Natural Resources to my written question against the information the same minister provided in his proactive report. If this gives you any doubt or causes you confusion, then I urge you to leave it to the House to decide, as Speakers Milliken, Jerome and many others have done in the past under these circumstances.

When you are ready to allow this matter to be put to the House, Mr. Speaker, I will be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member. I will take that under advisement and return to the House should we see fit.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***JUDGES ACT**

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved that Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak this afternoon in support of Bill C-5, an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code of Canada. The bill is premised on the conviction that when survivors of sexual assault appear before our courts, they have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to be assured that the law of sexual assault is being faithfully applied. There is no room for court decisions to be tainted by harmful myths and stereotypes of how survivors of sexual assault ought to behave. The determination to tackle this problem is deeply held by this government. However, I know it is also shared by parliamentarians from all regions of the country and all political stripes.

[Translation]

For far too long, victims of sexual assault have had to deal with a justice system that does not treat them with the dignity they deserve.

Many victims of sexual assault decide not to file a complaint because they are afraid of being mistreated and humiliated. That is why most sexual assaults committed in Canada are not reported to the police.

• (1555)

[English]

This is not an issue that is easy to resolve. Parliament alone cannot do it. Improving the way the justice system treats victims of sexual assault requires the mobilization of all levels of government and many stakeholders for broad action. In addition, all members of Canadian society have a shared responsibility to challenge and counter the myths, stereotypes and attitudes that have a pernicious effect on our justice system.

In this regard, education and information play a critical role. I applaud the extraordinary work that many organizations and individuals right around Canada are doing tirelessly to this end. However, Parliament has its own responsibilities. As parliamentarians, we can and we must take action. Canadians need to know that their elected representatives in this chamber are resolutely working toward a criminal justice system that all Canadians can trust and turn to, especially those who are the most vulnerable.

To this end, this bill seeks to ensure that superior court judges have the awareness, skills and knowledge to handle sexual assault cases in a manner that is fair to the parties, that is free from myths and stereotypes and that treats survivors with utmost dignity.

The bill also promotes rigour and transparency by requiring that judges provide reasons for their decisions in sexual assault proceed-

ings and that these reasons be set out in writing or in the record of the proceedings.

I would like to acknowledge the remarkable leadership on this matter by the Hon. Rona Ambrose, the former interim leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, in the last Parliament. In the previous Parliament, Ms. Ambrose introduced Bill C-337, the predecessor to the very bill before us today.

As we will recall, Bill C-337 received unanimous support in this very chamber, strengthened by an amendment brought forward by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, which did excellent work in studying the bill. The committee worked to amend it to include social context education in the bill. That complementary piece will ensure that judicial training and education includes working to better understand the demographics, the background and the lived experience of the litigants who appear before our courts.

[Translation]

The Senate sent the bill to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, which proposed meaningful amendments to address concerns about the bill undermining the independence of the justice system.

Members may recall that many stakeholders and parliamentarians, including the bill's sponsor, applauded the work of the Senate committee to improve the bill in question.

I agree with that view of the committee's amendments. Unfortunately, we were unable to pass the bill before the end of the previous Parliament.

[English]

Since the last Parliament, we have seen cross-party support for reviving this important measure. This is evidence of the strong support for the convictions underpinning this important bill, convictions which transcend political parties and partisan interests.

I want to thank all the parties, as well as our colleagues in the other chamber, for their commitment to a collaborative approach to this initiative. Canadians have sent us to this chamber with a clear message that they expect parliamentarians to work together. Our work on the bill is a clear illustration that we are listening and acting accordingly.

The bill places particular emphasis on the judiciary. Our government recognizes the need for education, not only for judges but also for all actors in the justice system. We are working with our provincial and territorial counterparts and justice stakeholders to expand our efforts in this area. However, the focus of the bill before the House today is on judges. To be a judge is to bear an important responsibility.

I want to quote from the Hon. Justice Gonthier, former justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. He said:

The judge is the pillar of our entire justice system, and of the rights and freedoms which that system is designed to promote and protect. Thus, to the public, judges not only swear by taking their oath to serve the ideals of Justice and Truth on which the rule of law in Canada and the foundations of our democracy are built, but they are asked to embody them.

Justice Gonthier continued:

...the personal qualities, conduct and image that a judge projects affect those of the judicial system as a whole and, therefore, the confidence that the public places in it.

The confidence of the public in the administration of justice is critical to the underpinning of the bill that is before us.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

Given judges' fundamental role, the public has especially high expectations of them. The Canadian Judicial Council put it as follows:

From the time they are considered for appointment to the Bench, and every day thereafter, superior court judges in Canada are expected to be knowledgeable jurists. They are also expected to demonstrate a number of personal attributes including knowledge of social issues, an awareness of changes in social values, humility, fairness, empathy, tolerance, consideration and respect for others. In short, Canadians expect their judges to know the law but also to possess empathy and to recognize and question any past personal attitudes and sympathies that might prevent them from acting fairly.

[*English*]

In order for judges to meet these very high public expectations, relevant judicial education is essential. This education must be continually evolving in order for judges to perform their duties in situations that are constantly changing, that are dynamic. A lot of great work is being done now, but now there is a need to enshrine in legislation that this is an expected requirement going forward. That is why judicial education is a central feature of the bill under consideration before us now, Bill C-5.

Our criminal law has undergone considerable reform over the past three decades to encourage reporting of sexual assaults; to improve the criminal justice system's response to sexualized violence; and to counter discriminatory views of survivors that stem from myths and stereotypes about how a "true victim" is expected to behave. We know that such perceptions, myths and stereotypes have no role in the justice system in 2020, and that is what the bill targets.

As a result, the Criminal Code prohibits all forms of non-consensual sexual activity. It provides a clear definition of consent. It identifies when consent cannot be obtained. It sets out the rules for admissibility of certain types of evidence to deter the introduction of these harmful myths and stereotypes.

I would now like to explain a few of the proposed legislative amendments.

The bill before us is, as I mentioned at the outset, essentially the same as the former Bill C-337, as amended by the Senate.

In order to require newly appointed judges to undergo training on sexual assault law and social context, the bill proposes to amend the Judges Act and to include a new eligibility requirement.

Under this amendment, candidates for employment as a judge of the superior court will be required to make a commitment to undertake this type of training if they are appointed. That is an important caveat. Upon appointment is when the training would take place. This training is to ensure that the courts take into account Canada's extensive law and jurisprudence on sexual assault and information

Government Orders

on the social context of litigants, without being influenced by preconceived or erroneous ideas.

The bill would also clarify that seminars established by the Canadian Judicial Council on matters related to sexual assault law must be developed after consultation with groups or individuals the council considers appropriate, including sexual assault survivors and groups supporting them.

In addition, the bill would require the Canadian Judicial Council to provide to the Minister of Justice, for tabling in Parliament, an annual report containing details on seminars offered on matters relating to sexual assault law and indicating the number of judges who have been attending. This is intended to enhance accountability in the education of sitting judges on these matters and to act as an incentive to encourage their participation.

Finally, the bill would amend the Criminal Code to require judges to provide reasons for decisions under sexual assault provisions of the Criminal Code. This amendment is intended to enhance the transparency of judicial decisions made in sexual assault proceedings by rendering them accessible, either in writing or on the record of the proceedings, so oral reasons would be sufficient as well.

I want to mention that this proposed amendment to require judges to provide reasons in the determination of sexual assault matters specifically is complementary to three currently existing requirements:

First, the members in the chamber should understand that section 726.2 of the Criminal Code requires judges to provide reasons when they are sentencing decisions.

Second, there is jurisprudence from the Supreme Court in a 2002 decision called Sheppard, which requires judges to provide reasons for their decisions more generally.

Third, subsections 278.8(2) and 278.94(5) of the Criminal Code require judges to provide reasons when determining whether certain types of evidence should be admitted in sexual assault cases.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Under this bill, the obligation to state reasons will be added to the other Criminal Code provisions relating to sexual assault. As a result, all provisions relating to sexual offences will be clear and accessible to the people applying them, thereby reducing the risk of an erroneous application of law by countering the potential influence of myths and stereotypes about victims of sexual assault and their behaviour.

This approach is in line with the Supreme Court of Canada's finding that these myths and stereotypes can undermine the courts' truth-seeking function.

*Government Orders**[English]*

It is also important to note for the purposes of today's debate that the government has already committed significant resources to support the availability of enhanced judicial training in this very area. In the 2017 budget, we provided the Canadian Judicial Council with \$2.7 million over five years, and half a million dollars per year thereafter, to ensure that more judges have access to professional development, with a greater focus in particular on gender and culturally sensitive training.

Our government is also actively at work with stakeholders to ensure that appropriate training is available to all of Canada's judiciary, including judges who are not federally appointed. Again, I want to acknowledge in this chamber the leadership and determination of the Hon. Rona Ambrose in making this happen as well.

Next, I want to turn to the important principle of judicial independence. This bill is designed to support that constitutionally entrenched principle. I parenthetically note that in my previous life as a constitutional litigator, I spent considerable time working on this very principle and dealing with this very issue. I am very proud to say today that the bill we are debating in this chamber clearly supports the principle of judicial independence and, importantly, the principle that the education of judges should be the responsibility of the judiciary. That is an important feature that is entrenched in this bill.

[Translation]

Whatever measures are taken to ensure that judges have access to sexual assault training and its social context, those measures would be ill-advised if they interfere with judicial independence.

Public trust requires knowing not only that judges have the expertise required to settle the disputes that come before them but also that they are independent of Parliament, the executive branch and any other group that could try to unduly influence them.

We in Canada are fortunate to have a strong, independent judicial system. We cannot take this independence for granted, and as parliamentarians, we must work to preserve and promote it.

[English]

What I can report to this chamber is that Canada's judiciary is strongly committed to ensuring that the best possible education is available to judges. In fact Canada, thankfully, is an internationally respected leader in judicial education and is a trailblazer in social context education in particular.

Let me briefly highlight the important roles of two organizations that oversee the work of judges. The first is the Canadian Judicial Council, which I briefly mentioned earlier, and the second is the National Judicial Institute.

The Canadian Judicial Council is responsible for setting professional development requirements for superior court judges. In its professional development policy, the council requires judges newly appointed to a superior court to complete an education program for new judges, as well as to complete a more general program within five years of appointment. These programs include sexual assault

law and social context education. What we are doing with this bill is making this a formal requirement.

The National Judicial Institute is responsible for the overall coordination of judicial education in Canada. In addition to being a primary education provider, the National Judicial Institute is an internationally recognized leader in judicial education. The institute seeks to integrate substantive law, skills development and awareness of social context in all of its programs.

I want to acknowledge the significant commitment of the Canadian Judicial Council and the National Judicial Institute to ensuring that judges have access to the training they need. We thank them for their full commitment to a justice system that all Canadians can trust, especially those who are most vulnerable.

It is also important to acknowledge in this chamber the important and respectful dialogue between the judicial and legislative branches that the previous bill, Bill C-337, triggered in the last Parliament, which I am confident will continue as the current bill, Bill C-5, is debated and studied. All partners in this dialogue share a strong commitment to a justice system that survivors of sexual assault can trust and that all vulnerable persons can trust, a justice system that treats them with the dignity and respect they so dearly deserve.

It is also important to outline how this bill would work within the context of other government commitments and government actions. Supporting victims and survivors of crime is a priority for our government. This includes working with provinces and territories to provide free legal advice and support to survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. It includes the government's commitment, announced in the Speech from the Throne, to build on the gender-based violence strategy and work with partners to develop a national action plan.

● (1610)

[Translation]

The bill before us represents a major step forward. It gives parliamentarians an opportunity to send a clear message to all Canadian victims of sexual assault that we are not indifferent to their experiences, that their courage is an inspiration and that they deserve a justice system that treats them with the utmost dignity and respect.

[English]

I know that we all share the same convictions in this regard, which is why I urge all members on both sides of this House to agree to support the very important measures contained in Bill C-5.

Government Orders

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's speech, and I too would like to acknowledge the work that was done by the Hon. Rona Ambrose in the previous Parliament and the work that this House did together, particularly at the status of women committee too, to get that previous bill, Bill C-337, to the Senate.

I am proud to indicate that the NDP will be supporting this bill to go forward to committee, but I have a number of questions for the parliamentary secretary. We know that often complainants in sexual assault cases are provided inadequate social supports and inadequate information about the court process, and they are often confronted with a system that completely ignores their wishes.

These are not problems that a bill can solve. While Bill C-5 is important, I would like to know how the federal government, acting in a leadership role with all the provinces, is going to move to address these issues.

My second question is with regard to the TRC's call to action number 27, which recommends that lawyers receive extensive training on first nations indigenous issues, particularly with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as systemic racism, which we are now seeing all across Canada. I wonder what the government may do to require training for judges to bring their competency up in those particular areas.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, the member has been a significant contributor to many Parliaments, including in the past study of this bill in his past work on the justice committee. I want to thank him and his party for their support of this bill. It is quite critical.

To address the first part of the question, the member opposite asked about some of the social supports, and I will readily confess that this obviously cannot be done in a vacuum. We need to be doing what we can to address the very difficult circumstances that face a number of victims, in particular sexual assault victims, when they interact with the justice system. I think what this would do is address the adjudication side with respect to sensitizing judges in their understanding of the issues, but there are many complementary pieces.

He raised the issue of the lawyers and potential legal support. One could also raise the issue about the police and their interactions with sexual assault victims and survivors. I think it all needs to be done in a complementary piece, and I look forward to aspects of the gender violence strategy that will look to those different dimensions.

The Minister of Justice's mandate letter states that he has been given a mandate to ensure that legal aid supports are there, in particular for survivors of sexual violence. I think that is a good step in terms of addressing the access to justice piece that the hon. member mentioned.

With respect to the TRC calls to action, there are many that still need to be addressed. We know this. There are many that also relate to the MMIWG's calls for justice. With respect to the lawyers' training, what I will indicate to him in all candour is that a previous incarnation of this bill looked at potentially having the training apply

to all applicants, regardless of whether they were appointed. The current iteration of the bill looks at applicants who are undertaking this training because they have been appointed.

It is an open question. As a member of the bar, I think all members of my profession need to have a better understanding and sensitivity training with respect to how to handle these issues and the issues that face all vulnerable people.

• (1615)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I welcome seeing Bill C-5 renamed and back in this place. As we all recall, the bill was proposed initially as a private member's bill by the former interim leader of the Conservative Party, Rona Ambrose. I am sure I am not alone, in a non-partisan sense, in saying we miss her in this place.

I wonder about openness to amendments. One came to mind recently when I had constituents asking in town hall meetings about a decision of an Immigration and Refugee Board adjudicator, a Ms. Randhawa. Her decision was appalling, and it was overturned in the Federal Court of Appeal. It occurs to me that perhaps we need to expand the range of training. In this particular case, the IRB adjudicator refused a request for refugee status because the adjudicator found it not credible that the woman who feared returning to her home country for fear of violent attack by an intimate partner had kept a child of rape, and therefore, the adjudicator said, it could not have really been rape. It is very upsetting to imagine that we have adjudicators with life-and-death control over people seeking protection in Canada.

I wonder if the hon. parliamentary secretary could indicate whether we might be able to expand the scope of training to people who deal with refugee claimants.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her contributions in the chamber.

This bill is focused on the Judges Act and Criminal Code amendments that relate thereto. It has been carefully calibrated to deal with the constitutional principle of judicial independence. Without going too much into the weeds, I would say to the hon. member that when dealing with adjudicators that are outside the scope of what is called a federally appointed judge or a superior court judge, there is the ability to be more prescriptive. Therefore, for people who adjudicate in quasi-judicial tribunals, for administrative adjudicators or decision-makers, there is the possibility to be even more prescriptive and more directive with respect to the training that needs to take place.

I know about the case the member has mentioned. That has been raised on the floor of the House, and quite appropriately so, because the fact that those types of myths and stereotypes are being perpetuated by various levels of adjudicators around this country and by various government appointees in this country is deeply problematic and needs to be addressed.

Government Orders

With respect to this bill, this bill has been calibrated for judges. Doing something more direct and even stronger with respect to additional adjudicators is something that I think all members in this House would welcome.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to echo the sentiments of my NDP colleagues in the House in stating our support for this important piece of legislation, while also insisting that we need to build on this specifically with a lens on the experience of indigenous women, recognizing that the violence experienced by indigenous women is far greater than what is experienced by other women in our country, and also recognizing that sexual violence against women remains constant while violence has gone down overall over the last few years.

There is no question that this legislation is key, but let us make sure we get it right. Let us make sure we use this opportunity as a Parliament to make a difference for survivors as they face the justice system. Let us make sure that we get it right by making sure that the experiences of indigenous survivors are part of the work we do going forward.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, the observation and comment of the hon. member dovetails with the previous comment mentioned by her colleague with respect to the TRC.

We know that women face significant hurdles when they are raising sexual assault concerns in formal processes, such as those in the criminal justice system. We know it is not a hospitable environment by any means, and there are significant challenges. Those challenges are exponentially multiplied when individuals also have other intersecting components in their lived experience, such as being racialized women or indigenous women in particular. We heard about that a great deal in the MMIWG's calls for justice. Addressing that aspect is something we are very committed to.

I am very pleased that in the study on the status of women in the previous Parliament, social context was inserted into the bill to make sure that the judges' lens of analysis and their information and training would accommodate for all of that lived experience that litigants present when they appear in court, but that needs to be fleshed out even further. The experiences of indigenous women in particular need to be a focus of this bill.

• (1620)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question is about the amount of consensus that we see as this piece of legislation advances, because there seems to be support from all sides of this House. I am wondering if my colleague can provide his thoughts on how encouraging it is when we see all parties coming together on such an important issue.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. I will confess that it is, unfortunately, all too rare, but it is very encouraging when it happens. Sometimes we can all stand united, all 338 of us, in recognizing an important bill that is trying to address a pressing social concern. That is what this bill represents.

There needed to be some tweaks to the legislation to ensure that it was compliant with judicial independence. We made those

tweaks with the help of committees, both in this chamber and in the Senate, but what we have before us is a very strong bill that hopefully all parties can get behind so that we can ensure that it comes into force as expeditiously as possible.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will point out to members that the questions and answers were a little longer than normal and that we need to allow for other people. I also want to remind members that they have to be in their seats if they want to be recognized.

I owe an apology to the member for Trois-Rivières. I did not see her stand, so I will certainly keep that in mind as the questions continue.

[*Translation*]

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 North Island—Powell River, Veterans Affairs; the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, Health; the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona, International Trade.

[*English*]

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House that I will take the unusual step of sharing my time in this early round. I believe all the parties have been surveyed and all are on board. I wish to seek unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Calgary Skyview.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to share his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I am sure the House will be thankful for that.

I am a proud member of the Law Society, and, because of that, part of the justice system. The justice system is supposed to be a safe place for victims of sexual assault. However, our justice system has had a checkered history in fairly weighing the rights of the victims versus those of the accused in sexual assault cases.

Incredibly, up until 1983, a woman's claim of sexual assault could be undermined by evidence submitted with respect to her sexual history. A woman's claim of sexual assault could be undermined or even dismissed because of such trivial, terrible considerations as the length of her skirt or her recent dating history.

I am glad to see that as a country, we have grown to understand that we need to stop blaming victims in cases of sexual assault and put the blame where it should be, directly at the feet of the perpetrator. However, Canada still faces a sexual assault epidemic, and our justice system appears only marginally capable of dealing with the torrent of these sexual assault cases.

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There are over 400,000 sexual assaults in Canada every year. By some measures, for every thousand sexual assaults that occur in Canada, only 33 are reported to police. That is unacceptable in a country as good and as great as Canada. Of those 33 reported assaults, believe it or not, charges are brought in only 12 cases; six cases are prosecuted and three cases lead to a conviction.

This is an extremely disturbing statistic. I have a sister and a mother, and the most precious thing in my life, other than my son in equal amounts, is my daughter. I now know that if she were to come across sexual violence, there would be less than a 0.1% chance of her perpetrator being brought to justice in Canada. That is a truly disturbing and atrocious number.

There are a number of reasons why victims do not report sexual assault, including shame, self-blame, feeling there is a lack of evidence, embarrassment and fear of retaliation. Another overlying reason is the lack of faith in the criminal justice system. As a member of the bar and this system, that deeply hurts me.

If there is anything we can do to improve the system for victims of sexual assault, that should be something we do. I will definitely be supporting this bill. In fact, I salute the government for bringing this important piece of legislation forward.

The lack of respect for women seems not to be limited to just the justice system. It seems that it has spread across the government. As we have seen recently, a Parole Board member in Quebec advised a violent criminal, one who had killed his own wife, to seek the services of a sex worker. That resulted in her violent death.

She was a beautiful, wonderful woman. God only knows what impact she could have had on society or what good she could have done for our world. Unfortunately, her life was snuffed out all too early, when she was merely a young woman.

We have also heard the stories in this House of what happened with the refugee board when a refugee adjudicator said that rape could not be rape if a woman decided to keep the child. I could not imagine something more offensive than that comment.

I call upon the government to look at this as an opportunity to spread the type of sensitivity training it is talking about for judges. It is honourable and I will support it. However, we should go beyond our judges to perhaps our adjudicators and to other individuals within the government who appear to desperately need this training.

Victims of sexual assault and sexual violence are throughout our community. Indeed, some statistics put it as high as one in three women will experience some form of sexual violence in their lifetime.

● (1625)

As a father of a four-year-old daughter, that statistic is absolutely disturbing to me. It is something that as a community, not just as legislators, we need to spend every resource on stopping.

While the number of men who experience sexual violence is much smaller, this is a pressing issue for everyone. Victims of sexual assault are, after all, our daughters, sisters, mothers, friends and co-workers. Quite frankly, they deserve better from us and they de-

serve more protection. We must, as a society, attempt to drive this out of our communities, our country and indeed our world.

Part of ending sexual violence is not just punishing the perpetrators of these heinous acts, but also helping the victims feel more comfortable in sharing their stories. Part of the reason this legislation is so important is that we need to make sure judges deal appropriately with these cases and make it as palatable as possible for the victims of sexual violence to tell their stories.

Many victims do not feel comfortable coming forward because of their lack of faith in the criminal justice system. They do the incredible and difficult feat of coming forward and then meet the new challenge of facing our justice system.

Sadly, some judges have indicated they do not understand what sexual consent means, even though it is clear in law and in the Criminal Code.

Some judges have gone so far as to ask a victim in court why she could not just keep her knees together. Those comments need to never be said again in a courtroom or anywhere in Canada. Other comments have been made asking why the victim did not scream while the alleged assault took place or why the victim did not skew her pelvis to avoid penetration.

I am paraphrasing actual statements that were said in a court of law. These are disgusting words that should never be spoken anywhere in our country, much less in a courtroom.

Perhaps by giving judges the necessary training we can avoid these outlandish comments and give victims more confidence in our justice system so they will know they will be treated with respect when they perform the ultimate act of bravery and confront their perpetrators.

I will be honest. As a man it is hard to speak about these cases because I cannot possibly understand what these women have gone through. I honestly cannot imagine the horror of living through sexual violence and being forced to retell that story over and over again. These women come forward to protect other women only to have their credibility questioned or to have to face their tormentor over and over again. However, this is what the criminal justice system demands for justice.

Fixing our criminal justice system is about helping our federal judges begin to understand the quiet suffering of victims of sexual violence and teaching our judges to be more compassionate toward the victims. This bill is not about fixing our justice system as much as it is about making Canada a safer, more friendly place for all women and children. This bill not only makes sense but is also a step in the right direction for all victims of sexual assault across Canada.

I will wholeheartedly support this bill, and I salute the government for bringing it forward.

Government Orders

• (1630)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I could tell my Conservative colleague's speech came very much from the heart.

On February 4, a few weeks ago, I remember the Leader of the Opposition raising concern in this chamber regarding the Parole Board of Canada and the murder of Ms. Levesque. I think it was inferred during that discussion that the Conservatives might like to see some of this training extended to other members under federal jurisdiction, such as the Parole Board of Canada and possibly even further to members of the Immigration and Refugee Board.

I know Bill C-5 is quite limited in its scope and is looking just at the Judges Act, but I am curious to hear the member's opinions and thoughts on whether other branches that make important decisions in our society should have this kind of training mandated as well.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I agree that this type of training, specifically with respect to the Parole Board but more generally as well, is needed throughout the government. As we have continuing instances, there appears, I dare say, to be a pattern of insensitivity toward the victims of sexual violence.

I think there can be no bad education or knowledge about this. As we continue to make sure that women, particularly those victims of sexual violence, are dealt with fairly, I would be in favour of that.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his contribution to today's debate. I welcome him to the House and to the justice committee. I also thank him for his support of this important bill.

The question I want to raise was touched upon in my opening remarks, but I think it is important for the context of the debate here.

We are dealing with federally appointed superior court judges. Obviously, the front lines of most of the criminal law work in Canada is actually at the provincial court. The court in the province that the member and I share is the Ontario court, and each province around the country has its court. This is where most sexual assault complainants and survivors will have their interaction with the justice system.

I have a general point, which is that we are trying to lead by example at the federal level, but we cannot impose the same sort of mandatory training requirements on the provincial sphere, at the provincial level of government with provincial court judges.

Given the member's strong commitment and conviction with respect to the importance of this bill, would he join with us in the overall work with provincial governments to encourage them to follow suit? Thus far, the only province that has followed suit is P.E.I., and it stands alone among the territories and provinces in terms of requiring this type of training.

• (1635)

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I look forward to working with the hon. member on the justice committee.

I would wholeheartedly join any activity such as he has suggested to work with our provincial counterparts and have this type of legislation enacted specifically in our home province of Ontario. I would go so far as to personally contact the minister of justice or the attorney general from the provincial government and schedule the meeting.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, can my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, tell me in specific terms what kind of continuing education judges will be required to receive in this case?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member for Northumberland—Peterborough South will answer the question because he is the one who gave the speech.

[*English*]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, this puts me in a bit of an awkward position speaking for the government. I am not sure how comfortable the government feels about that. I certainly feel a bit of discomfort here.

However, I understand that there is already much education and resources available. I look forward to working with the hon. member in the justice committee to set out exactly what this looks like going forward. I am confident that the government will work to deliver some exceptional training in this area.

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to stand in this place to deliver my maiden speech on behalf of my constituents in Calgary Skyview. Being elected as their representative is a very humbling experience, and I am very grateful for this opportunity. I have lived most of my life in Calgary and I cannot think of a better place to grow up. We are so fortunate for our rich, diverse communities that thrive on hard work and a true sense of belonging to Canada.

Throughout my campaign, I met many of my constituents to learn from them how best I could help make their life easier as their member of Parliament. Most notably, I met a young woman in my riding who said to me, "I have never seen anyone who looks like me do what you are doing. I want to go to school and do what you do." This sentiment meant a lot to me. What she saw was the first Sikh female to be elected in the House of Commons from Alberta. Other constituents would say "Our daughters are looking up to you."

I am proud to stand here today to represent not just those young women in my riding, but anyone who has dreamed of a life in service and of being here. I began imagining my journey to this place when I was really young. I would watch Amnesty International and my heart went out to those people. I would sit there and cry. Their stories moved me. I decided then I would practise law. Being a lawyer has been a tremendous honour for me. It is something I am very passionate about.

Government Orders

This is why this legislation we are debating today is very important to me as a lawyer, as a woman, and now as the deputy shadow cabinet minister for women and gender equality. I want to thank Ms. Ambrose for tabling this important legislation in the previous Parliament and for her dedication to this crucial issue.

Her bill, Bill C-337, received widespread support from parliamentarians and stakeholders. I am encouraged to see it moving forward. I am also pleased to see it as one of our commitments in our platform during the campaign.

Similar to Bill C-337, the bill we are debating today, Bill C-5, adds new eligibility for lawyers seeking appointment to the judiciary to require the completion of a recent and comprehensive education in sexual assault law as well as social context education. It requires the Canadian Judicial Council to submit an annual report to Parliament regarding the details on seminars offered on matters relating to sexual assault law and the number of judges attending. It does this while still maintaining the balance between judiciary independence and a fair criminal justice system, which is very important to me and to all Canadians.

The rationale for the need for the bill is all too familiar, given the recent spotlight on the treatment of sexual assault victims during trial. Sadly, this is certainly not something that is new. Let us explore the current state as it stands now. There is piecemeal training and education available in certain jurisdictions, but it is not mandatory.

We saw in 2016, a judge was found to have relied on myths about the expected behaviour of a victim of sexual abuse. That case was overturned on appeal for obvious reasons. We have seen instances of judges and the use of insensitive language when referring to victims, which can further lead to stigma.

In 2019, there were nearly a dozen cases going through Canada's court system that shed light on how judges continue to rely on myths and stereotypes when informing their decisions on sexual assault cases. Here we are, still seeing similar misinformation about the experience of sexual assault victims or victims of abuse, which can lead to poor decisions and, as we have seen, possible miscarriages of justice, sometimes resulting in new trials.

Retrials can be incredibly painful for the complainants, potentially further revictimizing them. The way victims are treated during their court proceedings as well as in the public eye we know is a major hindrance to reporting the crime in the first place. Victims witness how other sexual assault victims are treated in the justice system and are concerned that if they come forward, they will be treated in the same way.

We know that sexual assault is one of the most under-reported crimes in Canada. Of reported cases, only 12% result in a criminal conviction within six years, compared to 23% of physical assaults, as reported by Statistics Canada. We know the reasons for under-reporting include shame, guilt and stigma of sexual victimization. Victims also report the belief that they would not see a positive outcome in the justice system. This simply cannot stand.

• (1640)

What can we do? The best way to prevent this kind of sentiment is through education and training. The path forward that this legislation sets, similar to Bill C-337, allows for more confidence in the criminal justice system by ensuring lawyers who are appointed to the bench are trained and educated in this very specific type of case.

The future state, with this bill passed, is the hope that with education and training, the stories we have once heard of victims made to feel “less than” will not be repeated. This legislation is intended to help reduce the stigma of coming forward, of reporting the crimes and seeing justice prevail for the victims.

The hope is that with education and training, the victims of sexual assault will be treated with respect and avoid, at all costs, being revictimized, which can be incredibly traumatizing for the individual.

As Ms. Ambrose said during her testimony before the status of women committee, “Really...for me it's about building confidence. Women do not have confidence in our justice system when it comes to sexual assault law.”

This has to change if we are going to see an increase in sexual assaults being reported and convicted. This piece of legislation will bring us one step closer to eliminating barriers and giving victims of sexual assault more confidence to come forward.

Unfortunately, as we know, it is not just with the justice system where we see these types of myths and misunderstanding. The recent tragic death of a young woman in Quebec sheds a light on the broad scope of this issue. Marylène Levesque was killed at the hands of a convicted murderer who had a history of domestic violence and was granted day parole.

At a hearing into the offender's previous request for full parole, the board heard from his parole officer that while living in a halfway house, he had been allowed to have his sexual needs met. How was a man with a history of violence against women granted permission to have his sexual needs met?

That is why, in light of this horrific crime, we would like to explore studying an amendment to this bill to capture parole officers and Parole Board members in this legislation in the hopes that something like this does not happen again.

I look forward to further study on this potential amendment and debate on this piece of legislation. I hope it garners the same support in the House as Bill C-337 did. I hope this bill passes quickly as this will only move us forward as a society and help grow confidence in our justice system.

Government Orders

• (1645)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome the member for Calgary Skyview to the chamber and congratulate her on her maiden speech in the chamber. It is an auspicious occasion, and it is also important to be giving a speech on such an important topic that affects literally all of us in this chamber and all of us around the country.

I would put to her a question similar to the question that I put to her colleague. When we look at judicial training, we see what we are trying to do at the federal level, and we see a bit of a checkboard at the provincial level. She is a member of the bar, as am I. She practises in a different province. Alberta, among nine other provinces, does not have any form of mandatory training with respect to sexual assault awareness or social context education for its judges.

If she has conviction about the importance of this kind of bill at the federal level, would she share that conviction at the provincial level and encourage provincial counterparts to get on board with this important issue that addresses the concerns of women in the justice system?

Ms. Jag Sahota: Madam Speaker, I echo my colleague's comments that any education and any training is a good thing. I am all for that.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I offer congratulations to the hon. member for Calgary Skyview on her first speech.

I put a similar suggestion forward in my question for the parliamentary secretary about people within the Immigration and Refugee Board. The hon. member has raised an excellent point about people on parole boards. However, the government has structured the bill around judicial discretion and the Judges Act.

I think we really have to ask the government to consider it because, at the amendment stage before committee, we will not have the scope to bring in other legislation and other bills. At this early stage, there is so much support for the bill as written and concern that it should extend beyond judges to others who make basically life-and-death decisions, as the hon. member's question so rightly points out, without adequate understanding of the context, the risks and so on.

I am hoping that we might find a way through this at this early stage of looking at Bill C-5 to broaden it beyond the federal Judges Act to include other categories of adjudicators, such as parole boards and immigration review boards. My sense is that when we go to committee for clause by clause, amendments such as the ones we are discussing here will be ruled out of order, as beyond the scope of the bill. However, the government could still change it.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Madam Speaker, that is a question better put to the government, as to whether it is willing to make the amendment at this point, but I am in favour of involving education and training for parole officers and Parole Board members.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam

Speaker, the other day, the leader of the New Democratic Party stood up and made the suggestion that through unanimous consent we would pass this legislation all the way through. I thought it was quite encouraging to hear the leader of the New Democratic Party. We are all familiar with Rona and the fine work that she did. It was initially a Conservative private member's bill.

Could the member provide her thoughts with regard to that sense of co-operation that I made reference to when I questioned the parliamentary secretary responsible for the legislation about the overwhelming consensus to see this legislation pass through?

Ms. Jag Sahota: Madam Speaker, training and education to help bring a change in society is important. The whole House was in favour of that and so is our party. That is where we stand on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, it should come as no surprise that the Bloc Québécois will be supporting Bill C-5.

Our party supported the previous version of the bill introduced by the former interim leader of the Conservative Party, our colleague Rona Ambrose. After eagerly supporting it, I even sought the House's support for a motion calling on the Senate to fast-track the bill, since we were nearing the end of the parliamentary session. Unfortunately, what we feared came to pass: Our colleague's bill died on the Order Paper. We hope Bill C-5 will not suffer the same fate, and we are eager to support it.

Bill C-5 is important. It is a short bill, just a few pages long, on which we all seem to agree. Despite its apparent simplicity, this bill is critically important since it concerns the public's confidence in its judicial system.

Everyone knows that the judicial system is the backbone of any society. What will people do if they no longer trust their judicial system? They will take justice into their own hands. The extreme actions we occasionally see that we cannot abide would only multiply.

As lawmakers, it is our responsibility to ensure that our judicial system is credible and meets with the approval and has the support of all or the vast majority of the population. It is my view that passing this bill as quickly as possible would be in the interest of justice, those involved in the justice system, and the rule of law that we are responsible for protecting.

What impact will it have? The answer is simple. We are talking about the education of judges.

My Conservative colleague just reminded us of the situation that recently unfolded when an individual was released even though, in our opinion, he never should have been. It is a specific case, but it clearly illustrates a problem in our society. We are ill-informed and we often make decisions based on stereotypes, images or preconceived ideas about certain situations.

The issue that Bill C-5 addresses, sexual assault, is one that we are particularly ill-equipped and poorly trained to deal with, and our judgment in such matters is often biased.

I know quite a few judges, and most of them have a sterling reputation and are intelligent people of goodwill who show courage in the rulings they make, rulings that make sense and that are made in the interest of justice 99.9% of the time. Unfortunately, mistakes are occasionally made that damage the image of justice and undermine public confidence in the judicial system.

It is up to us as lawmakers to rectify the situation and restore public confidence. We have to make sure our judges have all the tools they need to do their work with the high degree of professionalism they bring to it now and want to keep bringing.

In virtually every case, a judge must assess the credibility of witnesses, the victim and the accused. Often, this is where a judge can be influenced by preconceived notions not out of malice but as a result of their experience and our culture.

That is exactly the kind of situation Bill C-5 seeks to address by providing better training for judges and raising awareness for everyone, including lawmakers, about the reality of sexual assault. How do victims react to given situations? Why do they not remember or remember inaccurately? Why do they misinterpret the events surrounding the assault? There are many important elements here.

• (1650)

If we want the justice system to work properly, we need to make sure the courts have a firm grasp of these issues. When asked to assess the credibility of a witness, a judge must have sufficient academic and practical knowledge to deliver a judgment that is sound and, above all, that all Canadians can trust.

It is normal for rulings to be overturned. Every day, rulings are handed down by the courts, and every day, rulings are overturned by the court of appeal. Sometimes the decision is two against one, as the judgment is not unanimous. Those cases go to the Supreme Court, which also often quashes appeal court rulings. Those judgments are not always unanimous either.

We cannot expect judges to deliver unimpeachable decisions. There is just no way. They would have to be superhuman. That will never happen. However, we can expect them to provide reasons for their decisions and make credible decisions. Ultimately, the public can always wonder whether the judge was right or wrong, but they will trust the judge. That is our goal.

That is what Bill C-5 proposes, and we are okay with that. We believe this is essential in our current justice system. For all of these reasons, and for the reasons cited by all of my colleagues over the past few years, we will be voting in favour of Bill C-5, and we hope it will be passed as quickly as possible.

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• (1655)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech and his comments. I congratulate him on being elected vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights a few days ago. I know that he is a member of the Barreau du Québec. I would like to note the same thing I pointed out to other hon. members in my previous interventions.

There is a system for training judges, but the real training ground for criminal justice in Canada and Quebec is at the provincial level. Judges from Ontario and Quebec are not subject to the same training and education requirements.

I would like to know whether the hon. member will join us in this great challenge of promoting the awareness of judges at any level, even in his own province, Quebec.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I just said how sensitive we are to this issue of credibility in judicial decisions. I am not going to change my mind just because we are changing jurisdictions.

I also want to congratulate my colleague, and I am pleased to work with him at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

That being said, I would like to point out that provincial matters are provincial matters. I am not going to try to influence provincial legislatures, especially Quebec's. We are rather protective of our jurisdictions. I think that is essential for ensuring the credibility of judicial decisions and parliamentary activities. It is important that we respect provincial jurisdictions.

If the National Assembly of Quebec felt it was necessary to change the rules for appointing judges or anything in the judicial process, that would be done in Quebec City. I will avoid any comment or anything resembling a directive that might be given to the National Assembly.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord for his speech.

Obviously, the NDP is pleased that Bill C-5 is moving forward. This bill contains some worthwhile measures, such as training to encourage the judiciary to be more aware of all of the complex issues related to sexual assault and sexual violence.

However, I am a bit concerned that we are not taking this further. We also need to implement a social assistance system to help victims of sexual violence. Right now, there are so many women, including in Quebec, who are falling through the cracks.

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The Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes in Quebec has indicated that approximately 20,000 requests for emergency shelter from women who want to protect themselves and their children are rejected every year due to lack of space.

It is good that we are providing better training for magistrates and judges, but there are women who need help who do not have a bed or a room. If they are forced to either return home to a dangerous situation or to be homeless and live on the streets, then we are not much further ahead.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about this urgent need in Quebec society.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. He is quite right. We have a serious problem. I am experiencing it in my riding, in many contexts.

There are not enough spaces in women's shelters for victims of violence. There are not enough soup kitchens for the poor, for people who live on the street. Those services are seriously underfunded.

We need to address this problem. Time and time again in the last Parliament, my colleagues in the NPD and the Bloc Québécois proposed additional funding for the provinces in that regard. I still support that request.

This needs to be done. That money must be transferred to avoid jurisdictional fights. This is hurting us at all levels, particularly when it comes to infrastructure investments.

As for these tagged funding envelopes, they need to stop. The provinces have real needs. The federal government needs to get the necessary funds together and transfer them to the provinces. We need them in Quebec and we know how to spend them.

• (1700)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague.

Considering the consensus and support this bill has, is there any way we could pass it faster?

I doubt I will hear anyone say anything against this bill's objective throughout this debate.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Members will recall that, just recently—last week, if memory serves—the NDP moved a motion to pass this bill quickly, and we voted in favour of that motion.

For some reason I did not quite understand, our Conservative colleagues did not support it. I believe they wanted to amend it. I will not get into the details because I was not privy to those discussions, but we completely agree that Bill C-5 must not suffer the same fate as Bill C-337, which languished in the Senate and died on the Order Paper.

We are hoping for swift passage of Bill C-5.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am wondering if it is the will of the House at this hour to deem that the bill has achieved second reading, third reading and report stage. We could send it to the Senate as currently drafted and move to a different bill to deal with the immigration review board, the Parole Board and the other issues that are probably outside the scope of this bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the gesture that has been made by the former leader of the Green Party. She understands and appreciates the significance of the legislation we are debating. It is always encouraging when politicians of all political stripes recognize the importance of gender training and education. We will have a better system as a direct result of this legislation.

My question for the member is similar to the question I asked other members this afternoon. It is not often that we get virtually unanimous consent for a piece of legislation. I suspect that Bill C-5 could receive the support of all 337 members of Parliament and possibly the Chair, although I do not think there will be a tie vote, so the Speaker will not have to vote.

Could the member provide his thoughts on how encouraging it is when all parties get behind legislation such as this?

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I obviously agree that the unanimous approval of a bill has incredible significance and bearing.

In my view, the justice system is the backbone of our society. I have said so from the start. Knowing that all parliamentarians share this view and that Bill C-5 should be adopted tells me that we have a strong backbone. We have what we wanted, that is, a consensus among Canadians.

The judicial system is one that the entire population supports and trusts.

The fact that we, in this place, are saying that we all want to pass Bill C-5 leads me to believe that we could not do any better.

• (1705)

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I wonder if I could seek the unanimous consent of the House to split my time with the hon. member for Victoria.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the House's granting me that privilege.

I want to start my speech on Bill C-5 by acknowledging the incredibly important role that judges play in our justice system. These are men and women who are put in very difficult positions. They have to weigh incredible amounts of evidence before them and make judgments as to whether, beyond a reasonable doubt, a person is guilty of the crime that the Crown is putting forward as an argument.

Judges know that their decisions one way or the other are going to have life-altering impacts, either on the accused or on the person who brought the complaint before the justice system. The debate today should not diminish the important role that judges play in our society.

I also want to take time to acknowledge the Hon. Rona Ambrose, the previous interim leader of the Conservative Party, for the work that she did in the 42nd Parliament with her private member's bill, Bill C-337.

I am happy to see that the government has brought the substance of that bill forward in this 43rd Parliament as Bill C-5. Judging from the character of the speeches so far, there is unanimous agreement that this bill needs to be passed, perhaps not through all stages as quickly as we would like, but I have a strong feeling that after today's debate the justice committee will be getting to work on this bill in short order.

We are supportive of the intent behind Bill C-5, particularly its intention of ensuring that victims of sexual assault and gender-based violence have confidence in the judicial system.

We know that complainants in sexual assault cases are often provided with inadequate social supports. They receive inadequate information about the court process, and they are often confronted by a system that ignores their wishes.

We should acknowledge that Bill C-5 would not solve those problems. It is an important step, but there is an entire systemic approach we need to take to ensure that complainants of sexual assault are coming to a system that they can have confidence in. That confidence needs to be built, and there is still much work to be done.

We need a systemic review of the judicial system when it comes to sexual assault to stop survivors from being victimized, victim-blamed, not informed and very badly supported by policing and justice systems.

The statistics underline this story. Statistics Canada estimates that only 5% of sexual assaults are reported to the police. We know that one in three women will experience sexual violence in her lifetime. For me that is a particularly personal statistic, given that I am the father of three daughters.

I do not want anyone to become one of those statistics, but that is a fact of life in our society. It is not limited just to women: We

know that one in six men will experience sexual violence in his lifetime as well. In 82% of cases, the offender is known to the victim. We know that 28% of Canadians have said that they have experienced workplace sexual assault or violence.

I got to know a transgender person in my riding very well over the previous campaign, and I know the courage it took for him to come forward and be a part of my campaign and to speak openly about the situation that transgender Canadians face in our country. They face nearly twice as much intimate partner violence in their lifetimes as women do, and that is an area that we definitely need to pay attention to as a society.

I also want to acknowledge that my Conservative friends have raised some concerns as to whether the scope of this bill could be expanded to include other areas that fall under federal jurisdiction, most notably the Parole Board of Canada.

We have also seen that the actions of the Immigration and Refugee Board deserve some scrutiny. Perhaps that is something that the justice committee, in its wisdom, can take note of and ask the appropriate questions of the witnesses who come forward to offer their expertise on this particular bill.

• (1710)

I was a member of the 42nd Parliament and remember with great pride, back in 2017 when we were deliberating Bill C-337, that it was great to see the House move a unanimous consent motion in March of that year to get the bill referred to the status of women committee. The status of women committee did some good work on the bill. It had five meetings, heard from 25 witnesses and reported that bill back to the House with some slight amendments.

This is to assure members of the House that the hard work on this bill has been done. We have a lot of witness testimony in the record, and I hope the testimony heard at the status of women committee back in 2017 will inform the justice committee and that we can take note of that when the justice committee is doing its work.

This bill seeks, through training seminars, to correct the problems I have noted through rearticulation to judicial candidates on the current standing of sexual assault laws, namely the principles of consent, conduct of sexual assault proceedings, and education regarding myths and stereotypes of sexual assault complainants.

That is because we have seen a record, through the actions of various judges, that this training is sorely needed. We have seen it through their comments during court proceedings and through referrals in their judgments, but we would be mistaken if we were to pinpoint this problem entirely on judges. We know that the police themselves have a lot of work to do, and I know they are trying their best to achieve this, but we know from the complaints of victims that this work is ongoing.

The Senate, when it received Bill C-337 through its legal and constitutional affairs committee, did make some amendments. There was a lot of concern regarding the constitutionality of the bill. I understand that the government's version is much closer to, or a wholesale adoption of, what the Senate committee did to Bill C-337.

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I know there is this ongoing battle between the legislature, the Parliament of Canada, and our judicial branch. Sometimes they can come into conflict. I know that Michael Spratt, a noted lawyer in the Ottawa region, has written about his concerns with the current bill, but I also know that Professor Emmett Macfarlane has said that Parliament is well within its rights to be legislating in areas such as the Judges Act.

I think this bill does a careful job, as is noted in the charter statement, of doing our best to respect judicial independence. This is really about setting up the training that exists. It is going to be overseen independently of Parliament. We will not have any influence whatsoever on what judges do with this training, because they are still going to be impartial and independent of Parliament when they exercise their judgment and bring forward rulings.

This bill, in particular, passes constitutional muster. I have read the wording of it quite carefully and I think Parliament has a role, as an expression of people's wishes and the changing norms of society, to express its will and make sure that the federal statutes of Canada reflect the changing mood of our country.

I would like to offer my congratulations to the government and all members for the unanimity that we are showing in the proceedings today. I think, though, that when we are looking at other issues plaguing Canada, particularly with respect to aboriginal rights, we still see a lot of systemic racism and very little understanding of what aboriginal rights and title mean. Sometimes this can be reflected in our federal court system.

In closing, my one offer to the government is that it look at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, particularly number 27, to see if this kind of training might also be mandated for judges and other parts of the justice system that fall under federal jurisdiction.

• (1715)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his contribution to the discussion and for the expertise that he brings to bear on it, given his past involvement in the previous Parliament and the study of Bill C-337.

I concur wholeheartedly that constitutional infirmities were pointed out in the previous incarnation of this bill through the hard work of people in this chamber and also in the Senate. In particular, Senator Dalphond worked very closely with the judiciary on language that would be acceptable in terms of not encroaching upon that sacrosanct principle of constitutional independence.

I believe we have landed in the right place in formalizing the requirement to be sensitized to these issues but not traversing the line, which would be to actually influence the decision-making that is being done by particular judges.

I also observe wholeheartedly the point he has made about indigenous reconciliation and the TRC's calls to action. I want to ask him about the social context amendment that was made at the status of women committee and how he feels that plays into that sensitization of the judiciary that is so required in this context.

Can he flesh out his opinions on that amendment?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I regret to inform the parliamentary secretary that my memory of that particular aspect is a little hazy.

I do know that my former colleague Sheila Malcolmson, who used to be the member of Parliament for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, was our status of women critic in the previous Parliament. I would like to take this opportunity to salute the very important work she did on that committee during that time.

This was originally a bill that landed in my lap as the justice critic. She took it, as the main critic, and ran with it. I salute the work that she did because I know that all members in the status of women committee carefully listened to the 25 witnesses who came forward during those five meetings, and there was some pretty heavy testimony.

I feel confident that the members of the status of women committee listened and faithfully observed that evidence, and I think the bill they returned to the House reflected that. I look forward to seeing what the present Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights will do once this bill is sent to it, hopefully by next week.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I wanted to speak to something related to this bill. On Vancouver Island we have the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre and clinic. I just wanted to take this opportunity, with so many members in the House concerned with this issue, to highlight that this facility is so significant and should be replicated in communities across Canada.

It is the only facility where there is a rapid response team for sexual assault victims, whether they are women or trans people who are affected by sexual assault, and it has a clinic facility that saves our health care system and reduces costs. It has a perfectly equipped, private room designed to allow police to do perfect recordings of interviews, with proper camera work and proper recording devices, and collect forensic evidence in a comfortable setting that feels like home. The clinic feels like home.

I just cannot say enough about how impressed I am by the work of the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre and clinic, and I do not know if my hon. colleague has had a chance to tour it. I would recommend it.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I have not yet had the opportunity to tour that facility, but I will take this opportunity to give a shout-out to an organization in my own riding: Cowichan Women Against Violence. It operates Somenos House in my riding, which is a transition house for women. I have toured the place, and it is a very worthwhile organization.

I think that speaks to the part of my speech where I said Bill C-5 is important, but it is only legislation. What we need is a systemic review of the entire system and how we can support complainants so they actually develop trust in our justice system.

I think the federal government would serve us well by giving worthwhile organizations, such as the one the hon. member mentioned and also Cowichan Women Against Violence in my riding, the resources they need to help some of the most disadvantaged members of our society.

● (1720)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am grateful to have the opportunity to rise to speak to this issue. For me, like many Canadians, this is a deeply personal issue.

I am among the one in three women who has experienced sexual violence and I know first-hand how the shame, guilt and stigma still persist in addressing sexual assault. I have also witnessed close friends and community members go through the legal system and struggle in dealing with the misconceptions and prejudice from support workers, police, lawyers and judges.

Having witnessed the challenges survivors face in our judicial system, many choose not to report it. Only one out of 20 sexual assault victims report to the police. A key factor for that is the lack of confidence survivors have in the judicial system to treat them fairly and to achieve a positive outcome.

For those who choose to report to the police or to pursue charges, the judicial system is rigged against them. The fear many survivors have that they will not get fair treatment is real, and it is supported by the evidence.

There is a profound lack of trust in the legal system. Out of the estimated 460,000 sexual assaults each year in Canada, only three out of every thousand lead to a conviction. That is number is staggering: three out of 1,000.

When it comes to sexual assault, it is clear that we need a systematic review of the judicial system to stop survivors from being victimized or victim-blamed, or not being informed or having reports systematically brushed aside and being badly supported by our policing and justice systems.

The Canadian justice system in its current form actually discourages sexual assault survivors or survivors of gender-based violence from coming forward. This bill seeks to take a small but important step forward in correcting the problem through training and education of judicial candidates. These future judges would get training on the current standing of sexual assault laws, namely principles of consent, conduct of sexual assault proceedings and education regarding myths and stereotypes of sexual assault complaints.

This is so important. It is a non-partisan issue. The last iteration of this bill passed unanimously in the House in the last Parliament, but was shamefully blocked by the unelected Senate. This is why the NDP agrees that legislation is needed to require judges to receive training around sexual assault.

Without taking away from the importance of the bill, which is desperately needed, we also have to acknowledge that it is just one of the needed steps. Treating sexual assault as only a criminal justice issue ignores the fact that just one in 20 victims report it to the police.

Sexual assault is also a public health issue, a personal health and wellness issue and a mental health issue. We need to treat it as such

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by also turning our attention to medical services, support and care. Trauma-informed approaches and an increased understanding of sexual assault among key service providers and actors is critical. This includes judges, but also police, medical professionals, lawyers and support workers.

I am also lucky to live in a riding where my constituents and I have the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre. I was lucky enough to be able to access its services when I needed them. It serves people of all genders. We know one in three women experience sexualized violence, but one in six men do as well. We know that non-binary and LGBTQ2I+ folks face disproportionate levels of sexualized violence.

We are truly fortunate to have the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre since it is Canada's only integrated sexual assault clinic. The clinic provides survivors of all genders access to trauma-informed medical and forensic exams, police interviews and crisis support, all in one safe, accessible and culturally sensitive, confidential location.

● (1725)

The availability of this survivor-centred care means that the vast majority of survivors in my riding will never need to go to a hospital or police station to get the care they need. When the clinic opened, the number of emergency responses more than doubled, meaning twice as many survivors were able to access emotional support, preventative medication and options for police reporting. The number of supported police interviews rose by 400%. All of this took place while diverting 280 people from the emergency room and reducing costs for other service providers.

However, the clinic has no dedicated or secure sources of funding. It relies entirely on one-time grants, and the service will be extremely vulnerable in the coming year and a half. The bill is a step in the right direction, but we also need to ensure that comprehensive support services are available for all survivors. There is so much work to do, and I am hopeful we can take this important small step forward quickly.

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Judges need training to challenge the false stereotypes about sexual violence that permeate our society. We have seen too many appalling examples in recent years showing that some judges continue to hold false stereotypes about women and sexualized violence. These biases discourage all survivors from coming forward in the first place and create barriers for survivors who do so in seeking justice through the legal system.

Trauma is complex, and judges need to understand survivors' perspectives and the impact of the criminal justice system on survivors of sexual assault. The training needs to be culturally informed and relevant to the unique needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations. Some groups face disproportionately higher rates of sexual violence, and many groups face very specific barriers in seeking help from law enforcement agencies and the justice system. They include those from northern, rural and remote communities, sex workers, people who are trafficked, LGBTQ+ people, indigenous women, immigrant and refugee women and women with disabilities.

The bill could be improved at the justice committee by making sure that seminars related to sexual assault are developed in collaboration with these groups and by specifically bringing the bill within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action no. 27. We can also ensure it is in line with the calls to action from the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls report.

There is a clear benefit to ensuring that judges are well informed not only about the laws that pertain to sexual assault but also about the physical, mental and emotional impacts of sexual violence on survivors and how those affect decision-making, behaviour, ability to recall and so much more. Building confidence in our courts would make more victims feel empowered to come forward.

The message sent to survivors by the Senate when it refused to pass the bill in its former iteration in the last Parliament was dismissal, a dismissal of the idea that what happens to victims of sexual assault matters, a dismissal of survivor needs and a dismissal of the real barriers they encounter. This message is reinforced throughout our whole judicial system.

Supporting this legislation sends a message to survivors that their elected members of Parliament are standing up for them and are committed to doing the work necessary to support them. We recognize the stigma and barriers they face and are working hard to give them a reason to have more confidence in our system.

● (1730)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Victoria for her courage and for being so candid in terms of her own lived experience. That is exactly what this chamber is meant to be about, and I salute her for being so honest with all of us.

This is the second time in the last 25 minutes we have heard about the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre. I will make a commitment here on the floor of the chamber that the next time I am on the island I will go see that centre. It sounds like it is exactly the type of institution we need to make things more welcoming and inviting

and to reduce some of the obstacles in place for women who have survived sexual assault.

Some of the suggestions the member has made are very appropriate. However, I am also conscious of where we have jurisdiction and where we do not, although I hate to be so legal about it. With medical professionals, we would need provincial co-operation, and with front-line police officers in the city of Victoria, we would need local co-operation.

Are there instances where the member feels that at the federal level, we can show leadership in expanding the sensitization of federally appointed individuals, who are under federal jurisdiction, to make the experience of a survivor of sexual assault less difficult and boost the number of complaints that are seen through to completion?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his commitment to visit the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre. I extend that invitation to all members in the House. It is an incredible space, one that I hope is replicated in other communities.

I particularly appreciate that he talked about working across jurisdictions, because I think it is important that we work with our provincial and municipal partners to reduce stigma and support survivors in all cases. This bill is an important step toward training for judicial candidates. I think the Parole Board officers also need that.

Having a debate about the death of Marylène Levesque is a stark, horrific reminder. I think all Canadians would benefit from training and education on these issues. I would also invite the members of this House to do their own training. There is a lot of information out there. We need to come together in our communities, in our organizations and in every aspect of our world to support survivors. It is one in three women or one in six men, and those numbers are even higher for non-binary trans individuals. That means there are dozens of people in this House who have experienced sexualized violence. Our day-to-day interactions need to shift dramatically, but especially when survivors are reaching out for support or accessing services. When we are delivering services, we need to make sure they are done in trauma-informed and supportive ways.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, which was very moving.

I understand that this is an extremely important bill that we want to pass as quickly as possible. It is very important to do so. There was a suggestion that groups be consulted. That is a very good idea.

Does my colleague believe that the bill goes far enough? Does she have any suggestions in that regard?

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I am sorry I cannot respond in French. I promise I am learning, so hopefully some day soon I will be able to in the House.

When we talk about groups that have been marginalized by our systems, specifically groups that face higher instances of sexualized violence, these people need to be consulted in the creation of any education program. To develop training and seminars without their input means we would have glaring gaps in service. When we look at the higher rates of sexualized violence for indigenous women, women with disabilities, and immigrant and refugee women, and we look at the barriers that people face in coming forward to the police, we need to make sure that our training is going to serve the people who need it most, so I do—

● (1735)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development.

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe.

It is an honour for me to speak to Bill C-5. As members know, if passed, this proposed piece of legislation will amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code to require newly appointed provincial superior court judges to participate in training on sexual assault and the social context in which it occurs. Judges are expected to apply the law in a manner that is respectful of the dignity of survivors. Training on sexual assault law and the social context in which the sexual assault occurs will help to ensure that they have a full understanding of the complex nature of sexual assault when presiding over such cases.

This proposed legislation will also require judges to provide written reasons for their final decisions in sexual assault matters. Doing so will improve the transparency of judges' decisions.

It is noteworthy that only 5% of sexual assaults in this country get reported. Bill C-5 would give us an opportunity to strengthen our criminal justice system and give survivors of sexual assault and all Canadians more confidence in our system.

Today I will use my time to demonstrate how this legislation could build the confidence of survivors of sexual assault, as well as their families and loved ones, in our criminal justice system, and help survivors feel more comfortable in reporting these crimes to the police.

Sexual violence is a widespread problem in Canada. It is one of the most under-reported crimes. As I stated earlier, only 5% of sexual assaults in Canada are reported to the police.

I would like to elaborate on the social context. Brampton, especially in my own riding of Brampton West, is one of the fastest-growing populations in Canada. More interestingly, the majority of Brampton's residents are visible minorities. Violence, whether it is sexual assault or other forms of domestic violence, is massively under-reported. Due to the stigma of sexual violence, racialized women are even more reluctant to seek help. This is even more true for indigenous girls and women, women with disabilities and LGBTQ2 community members.

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Many factors can influence whether or not survivors will report that they have been sexually assaulted, such as the fear of being blamed or not being believed, concerns over retaliation from their attacker, anxiety of having their personal lives publicly judged and the fear of judicial error. These are just some of the factors and truths of the society we live in.

These factors are exacerbated in marginalized communities. Such barriers transcend but can also be compounded by intersectionalities of one's gender, age, class, disability and ethnicity. That is why the social context is so necessary.

Myths and stereotypes about sexual assaults are also dangerous and can have substantial negative impacts on whether a survivor will report. They also negatively impact whether there can be a trial that is fair to the accused, the victim and society at large.

Undeniably, a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system is one of the significant reasons that survivors do not come forward.

For those who do report the crime, they often tell us that they are re-traumatized by the process. As myths and stereotypes regarding sexual assault continue in the justice system, scrutiny about what the survivor did or did not do instead of the actions of the accused often determine the outcome of a case. This dehumanizing process, along with a lack of adequate supports and resources, can revictimize and further traumatize those who have experienced sexual violence.

In spite of the progress we have made, the criminal justice system is still a source of further distress and humiliation for survivors of sexual assault. Sexual violence is a crime that robs people of their choice, strips them of their bodily and sexual integrity and undermines their dignity and psychological well-being.

The impact of sexual assault is still not well understood in society, and rape myths are still common and persist throughout the justice system. For example, in today's society, there is a disturbing misguided belief that survivors of sexual violence often falsify sexual assault reports.

● (1740)

There is also a mistaken belief that sexual assault is just consensual sexual activity that “went too far” or “got out of hand”. There is a persistent myth that if it were a “real” sexual assault, the survivor would have fought back or tried to get away. There is a misconception that a survivor should be able to recount every detail in a linear and organized sequence.

Neuroscience research about trauma provides evidence that what might appear to be an inconsistency in a way a victim reacts or how the victim recounts the incident can actually be a typical, predictable and normal way of responding to and coping with a traumatic event. Understanding this can change the way we view the person's credibility and reliability.

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Thankfully, we are now starting to have a better scientific and psychological understanding of the different reactions that survivors have to traumatic events like sexual assault, including the impact of trauma on behaviour and memory. We also now understand that intergenerational trauma is a very real consequence of violence, which not only hurts individuals and their families, but also impacts communities as a whole. That is why training and awareness can help us to be fairer and more consistent in understanding how survivors react in sexual assault cases.

Navigating the criminal justice system can be extremely difficult for survivors of sexual assault. They must feel confident that they will be treated fairly and with dignity. With education and training on sexual assault and the social context in which it occurs, as well as its impact on survivors, we can help build a better criminal justice system in which people feel more confident in reporting sexual assaults and stay engaged throughout the criminal justice process.

Sexual assault is a form of gender-based violence and is one of the most under-reported crimes in Canada. With Bill C-5, we are building on our federal investments to prevent and address gender-based violence.

In 2017, we launched *It's Time*, Canada's strategy to prevent and address gender-based violence. This is the first strategy of its kind. It invests over \$200 million in federal initiatives to prevent gender-based violence, support survivors and their families, and promote responsive legal and justice systems. Today, Bill C-5 forms part of the larger response to the issue of gender-based violence.

Judges are trained to be impartial and unbiased and to have a thorough understanding of the law. Given that they are the individuals responsible for delivering justice, it is in everyone's interest to fill any gaps in their training. Bill C-5 would make it mandatory for all newly appointed provincial superior court judges to participate in continuing education in sexual assault law and social context. This will help ensure the superior court judges have a full understanding of the complex nature of sexual assault when presiding over such cases.

Canadians need to have confidence that the judge in front of them is not influenced by myths and stereotypes in the judge's application of the law and that the judge understands the impacts of the trauma. Survivors also need to have confidence that the decision rendered in their case will be well reasoned and not influenced by biases and misconceptions.

This bill would help us move toward a higher level of confidence we must achieve. It would help empower women to work toward alleviating institutional oppression faced by women, including indigenous women, racialized women and women with disabilities, as well as members of the LGBTQ2 community.

I strongly encourage all members of this House to recognize the importance of Bill C-5 and to support it. Together we can continue to strengthen Canada's criminal justice system and give survivors of sexual assault and all Canadians more confidence in our justice system. Let us seize the opportunity to create a safer and more responsive justice system for all those who have experienced sexual violence and provide a better future for families, communities and all Canadians.

• (1745)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Madam Speaker, during the statement that my colleague made today, she made reference to the gender-based violence strategy.

In 2017, our government launched its first-ever gender-based violence strategy, and we backed it up with over \$100 million in funding over five years.

Would my colleague elaborate on how Bill C-5 would fit within that strategy?

Ms. Kamal Khera: Madam Speaker, as has been mentioned by my colleague, in 2017 our government launched the gender-based violence strategy. We have invested close to \$200 million in federal initiatives to ensure we prevent gender-based violence, support survivors and their families and promote responsive legal and justice systems. Bill C-5 fits perfectly with many parts of our gender-based violence strategy.

It is so nice to see, especially on issues like this, all members of the House come together and support it. I am very optimistic and thankful for each and every member who spoke to this important issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

Enhancing judicial training and knowledge is a step in the right direction.

However, we must not have situations where women are physically unsafe. Sadly, the fact is that, at least 20,000 times a year, Quebec's shelters have to turn away women who need help, because there are not enough beds, because there are no rooms for them. The women must either go back to an unsafe situation or live on the streets.

I would like my colleague to tell me about our underfunded shelters for female victims of violence.

[*English*]

Ms. Kamal Khera: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague has raised an important question. Part of our gender-based violence strategy is to ensure we listen, especially to front-line workers and community organizations that do incredible work to support the survivors of gender-based violence. We continue to support those people. That is a very important aspect of our gender-based violence strategy. I look forward to working with all members of the House to continue to support these organizations.

It is important to recognize that the bill before us today is an important one. It was introduced previously and was supported by all members of the House. I look forward to working with many members of the House to ensure we work hard and continue to support survivors of gender-based violence.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened to the answer from my colleague who just spoke. I do not think she answered the question asked by the NDP member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

The member said that 20,000 women seeking help from women's shelters are turned away due to a shortage of beds. Of course, the government had good intentions and has done this and that.

Should there not be a special budget specifically for expanding these shelters or building new ones? That would ensure that no woman fleeing from violence is forced to stay in an unsafe situation because there is no room for her.

• (1750)

[*English*]

Ms. Kamal Khera: Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that our gender-based violence strategy invests over \$200 million in federal initiatives to prevent gender-based violence, to support survivors and their families, to promote a responsive legal and justice system and to ensure we support those front-line organizations that provide that support. This is an issue that impacts every riding. It is important to also work with our provincial and municipal counterparts to make this a reality in every community.

I look forward to working with my colleague on this ongoing issue.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an absolute pleasure for me to rise in the House today to speak to this important legislation, Bill C-5, an act to amend the Judges Act and also the Criminal Code of Canada.

I feel very passionate about this piece of legislation, because I have seen first-hand many barriers that women and Canadians face when they are victims of sexual violence.

Prior to entering politics, as I have mentioned a few times in this House, I was a front-line social worker. I served over 23 years with the Codiac regional RCMP as the victim services coordinator. During that time, I had the privilege of accompanying many survivors of sexual violence through some very difficult times.

Within the RCMP, a part of my job was assisting police officers in conducting these types of investigations and also helping victims navigate through a very a complex system, preparing them for court and oftentimes accompanying them to court. I have personally had the privilege of accompanying probably thousands of victims who faced these very difficult situations. I wish I could stand here today and say that I have never heard any inappropriate comments made by judiciaries, but that is not the case. I have seen first-hand some of the treatment that women and individuals have gone through, which is why I feel so passionate that this bill move forward. I am

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pleased to see that all members of this House are supporting the bill.

[*Translation*]

If passed, this bill will ensure that superior court judges who hear sexual assault cases get proper training so they will not be influenced by harmful myths and stereotypes that persist in our society. It will also lead to a better understanding of the social context surrounding this type of crime in our country. This training will also assure the public that judges are applying the law in a way that respects survivors' dignity and reality. This training will give judges the right tools to make fair, impartial decisions.

The bill will also require judges to explain their final decisions in sexual assault proceedings in writing, which will make the process more open and transparent.

[*English*]

Sexual assault is a form of gender-based violence and one of the most under-reported crimes in Canada. When I was a front-line worker, we would often say that fewer than 6% of survivors came forward, and today we have heard in the House the statistic of 5%, and so we know that this crime is truly under-reported. Unfortunately, gender-based violence is one of the most pervasive and deeply rooted human rights violations of our time, and we have to remember that it is 100% preventable.

I would like to talk about the Government of Canada's coordinated efforts to prevent and address gender-based violence, because Bill C-5 is another important piece of a larger suite of initiatives designed to better support survivors and their families, as well as to promote a responsive legal justice system.

First, let me explain what gender-based violence is.

Gender-based violence is violence directed towards another person based on their gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender. Gender-based violence is linked to gender inequities, unequal power dynamics and harmful gender norms and behaviours. It is made worse by other forms of discrimination.

Women and girls, racialized women, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, indigenous people and people with disabilities are at an increased risk of experiencing gender-based violence. Transgender, two-spirit and gender-diverse people in Canada also experience higher rates of violence.

In Canada, gender-based violence continues to happen at an extremely alarming rate. According to data collected by Statistics Canada, between 2008 and 2018, over 700 women were killed by their intimate partner in this country. In 2018, one in every three women experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public. While these numbers are terrifying, the reality for indigenous women and girls is even worse. In 2018, the rate of homicide was nearly seven times higher for indigenous women and girls than for their non-indigenous counterparts.

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Faced with such a bleak picture, the government took action.

● (1755)

[*Translation*]

In 2017, the Government of Canada took action, launching the very first federal strategy to prevent and address gender-based violence entitled “Canada’s Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence”.

The strategy includes over \$200 million for federal initiatives to prevent gender-based violence, support survivors and their families, and promote responsive legal and justice systems.

[*English*]

The gender-based violence strategy is the first-ever federal strategy of its kind because it takes a whole-of-government approach and is informed by grassroots activism and feminist action.

We listened to survivors and women’s and equality-seeking organizations in communities across the country that are working tirelessly to address gender-based violence within their communities. Let me give some examples of the initiatives under the strategy that were informed by their voices.

As a part of the strategy, the Public Health Agency of Canada, also known as PHAC, is investing more than \$40 million over five years and more than \$9 million per year ongoing. This includes investing in initiatives that prevent child maltreatment and teen and youth dating violence, and equip health professionals to respond to gender-based violence.

For example, the Public Health Agency of Canada is funding projects through which young Canadians learn how to develop and maintain healthy relationships that are free from violence and abuse. Educators are also provided with new tools to increase their capacity to deliver this type of guidance to young Canadians.

Teaching teenagers across Canada about what a healthy relationship looks like also helps foster positive relationships, changes attitudes and promotes gender equality. It helps foster a greater understanding, ultimately resulting in a safer community for young Canadians anywhere in Canada from coast to coast to coast.

In addition, the Public Health Agency of Canada is investing more than \$6 million per year to support the health of survivors of family violence. Improving physical and mental health outcomes for youth and children, helping mothers experiencing family violence learn the impact of violence on their parenting and their children’s development, while building mothers’ self-esteem and improving their positive parenting and healthy relationship skills, and building resilience and life skills in young women are just some examples of what the funded projects aim to accomplish.

Just as Bill C-5 proposes to train judges, under the strategy we are training RCMP front-line officers so that they can better understand the social context surrounding gender-based violence. The goal is for survivors to feel more confident in moving forward to denounce their aggressors and for officers to be more understanding of the survivors’ situation.

These are just a few examples that demonstrate the ongoing progress of the strategy.

[*Translation*]

As part of the strategy, we are working in close co-operation with every level of government, including the provincial and territorial governments, as well as several departments and organizations. We are pooling our resources to strengthen our ability to support those affected by gender-based violence in communities across Canada.

We are working on establishing a national plan that would ensure that anyone facing gender-based violence is protected and has reliable and timely access to services, no matter where they live.

[*English*]

In closing, I could continue discussing our accomplishments and the continuous efforts we are making. The point is that Canada’s strategy to prevent gender-based violence is moving forward because we know there is still more work that needs to be done.

We need to give Bill C-5 our full support. We are counting on all members of Parliament to help us continue this crucial work to end gender-based violence within our communities.

● (1800)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member down the way has had a lot of experience in this field through her work in social work and also with the RCMP. At the core of it, this bill is about safety for women and girls, and it would give judges the training and the tools to support mental health, address gun violence in homes and support victims of violence in other ways.

Could the hon. member talk about how nuanced and interconnected issues are around gender-based violence, and how judges need to understand the nuances in order to protect the safety of women and girls in our communities and work with agencies like the Canadian Mental Health Association, Women in Crisis in Guelph and agencies helping women in other ways as well?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague from Guelph for his tremendous work in his riding when it comes to mental health and support services. I thank him for all the work he continues to do.

When it comes to providing the appropriate sensitivity training, it is a must for all professions, and judges are not excluded from that. It is truly important. When I look at the work Ms. Ambrose did in putting the bill together, she has to be commended for a job very well done. This is probably an area that perhaps was not addressed in years gone by, but we certainly recognize that if we want to have an effective judicial system to meet the needs of all survivors of sexual violence or all types of victims, we have to ensure the appropriate training is in place.

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Again, I commend all members of the House for wanting to support the bill and hopefully getting it to the other House in a timely fashion.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I enjoy my time with the member at the PROC committee, and I appreciate her time in the House on this issue.

One of the realities is that sexual assault and gender-based violence disproportionately impacts women, members of the LGBTQ2+ community, persons living with disabilities, people who are poor and suffering on the socio-economic ladder and sex workers.

Could the member speak to the issue of how the bill will ensure those groups are consulted, hopefully, and implement the training to better educate these folks on the realities facing them?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I also appreciate working with the member opposite on the PROC committee. I always appreciate her interventions.

When it comes to providing the training that is needed, we certainly have to recognize that we have many vulnerable groups within our society. We recognize the groups the member has listed are also victims of sexual violence at a higher proportion than many others. Therefore, we have to ensure the training is appropriate.

I would also like to highlight, however, that when it comes to gender-based violence strategies, I am extremely proud that our government has consulted with many of those vulnerable groups mentioned by my colleague. We wanted to ensure that we had the strategy right, and to get it right we had to meet with people with lived experience, and living experience, and also people who worked with these clients as well.

As a result, we have come up with a wonderful strategy, the first of its kind in Canada. We are looking not only at the judicial system within the strategy, but also at all social services that affect survivors of sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

• (1805)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to call it 6:39 p.m.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in this House today to discuss a question I asked a few weeks ago of the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

The reality is that last year there was an NDP motion put forward in the House by the member for Courtenay—Alberni, who proposed that when we look at the reality of so many veterans in our country, we want to make sure to support them the best way we know how, and the best way to do that is to make sure that any unspent resources at the end of the fiscal year would move forward into the next fiscal year.

That motion was voted on in this House and actually was one, happily, that was voted on unanimously. It was good to see support from all members for the veterans who have served our country. The motion was voted on positively, but sadly, the implementation was not carried out. In fact, last year \$381 million was not spent on veterans as it should have been, in my opinion. I believe that the veterans of this country who served us so fearlessly deserve better.

The minister answered the question that I asked by saying, “benefits are demand-driven”.

Then on February 10, multiple articles came out, letting Canadians know that there were 44,000 veterans waiting on information about their disability benefits. That list of veterans at the end of September 2019 showed a 10% increase from six months earlier. It was quite a startling number.

We know, because veterans have told us, that long delays are stressful. To change these delays, it seems to me that more resources are needed for things like finding staff who can actually help deliver these services so that those backlogs do not become so long.

What was interesting to me is that the minister, when interviewed on this particular fact, said in one article:

Of course I always want more money. But what we have to do is deal with the money that we have and make sure we put the system together as efficiently as possible.

The minister said that he would always want more money. There was a motion in the House saying that if there were unspent dollars at the end of the fiscal year, we would forward them and put them into the next year's fiscal year. That was the NDP motion, and we all voted for it in this House unanimously. Then we realized that the 2018-19 allotment for Veterans Affairs was actually \$127 million less than the year before, and at the end of that same 2018-19 period, over \$100 million was left unspent.

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The veterans ombudsman's report stated very clearly that issues about wait times are the single greatest complaint that they receive.

Today I am here to ask the question again: Why are the resources promised to veterans not being forwarded, and when will action be taken?

• (1810)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for bringing up an issue that is very important not only to me and our government but to all Canadians: the well-being of our veterans, members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families.

The House supported the motion in 2018 to end lapsed funding. We all want to ensure that veterans and their families have access to the supports and services they need when they need them. The well-being of veterans is a top priority for me and our government. That is why we are committed to doing more to support veterans and their families.

Our benefits are demand-driven. No matter how many veterans come forward, when eligible, they will receive their benefits. The process guarantees that whenever veterans come forward, whether it is this year, next year or beyond, they will receive those benefits. The resources are there for them at all times.

Over 90% of Veterans Affairs' budget goes to funding veterans programs and benefits. Every day, over \$5 million in disability benefits goes to veterans. Last year alone, we spent \$4.4 billion directly on benefits and services for veterans, their families and other eligible recipients. This is \$1 billion more than the former Conservative government. This year, we expect to spend approximately \$5 billion directly on services and benefits for our veterans. Changing how we account for lapsed funding will not change that or our priorities.

The veterans community is evolving and expanding along with its needs. Veterans Affairs is evolving too. For example, we opened 10 offices to provide better services, face to face, to veterans and their families. These offices were closed by the former Conservative government. We increased the amount of benefits provided to veterans with service-related injuries and illnesses. We introduced pension for life as an option for them. We also introduced eight new and enhanced initiatives to better support a seamless transition to life after service.

Our evolution in services and benefits and our success in reaching veterans and their families has led to a significant increase in volume. Disability benefit applications alone rose from 29,000 in 2015 to 54,000 last year, which is an increase of almost double. To respond to this increased demand, Veterans Affairs has increased its program budget. This guarantees that no matter how many veterans come forward or when, they will receive the benefits and services they are entitled to.

It is worthwhile to note that last year 98% of the estimated funds available was spent to support veterans and their families with the benefits and services they needed. The remaining 2% that the hon. member has identified provides VAC the required flexibility to ensure that sufficient funding is available to support all veterans who

are approved for those benefits. Therefore, there has been no impact on our commitment to helping veterans or on the ability of the department to deliver the services required.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I am sort of shocked.

I would not disagree in any way that the Conservatives did not support veterans in the way they had demanded. That was something I witnessed. However, the reality is that the new government, which keeps comparing itself to the last government, has still not hired back the right number of people to do the work, those the Conservatives removed. It is definitely something the lapsed money could help out with.

There are 44,000 veterans on the wait-list for disability benefits. We are hearing from the government that they should not worry because they will receive their benefits. However, the question is, when? Why is this process taking so long?

I hope the government will take this seriously, treat veterans a bit better and look at the opportunity provided by the motion that was in the House to make sure that lapsed spending is given back to this particular group that needs it so desperately, especially when the wait-lists are very long.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, because Veterans Affairs Canada's programs and services are demand-driven, we will never be able to predict 100% accurately the exact funds required for the programs for the upcoming year. Rest assured, however, that there will always be money available to support those who are eligible for these benefits.

We will continue to adapt and provide programs and services to the changing needs of veterans and their families. We will review them and see where things can be improved.

Make no mistake, we always want to provide faster, more efficient and higher-quality service for our veterans. This government will never cease in its efforts to improve the lives of our veterans and their families.

• (1815)

HEALTH

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to follow up on a question I asked the Minister of Health on February 6 with regard to the opioid crisis and how it is affecting my community in profound ways.

Every day, in parts of my community, there is a reminder of just how bad this crisis has become. It is a big-city problem that has moved to small communities. When I look at the work of the RCMP and various front-line service organizations, I see that we are very much at a breaking point.

If we look nationwide, nearly 14,000 people have now died from the opioid crisis. More than 17,000 people have been hospitalized as a result of this mounting crisis. In my own riding, in the 2018-2019 year, we had 26,683 client visits, representing 316 unique individuals. There were 170 overdoses recorded. More than a third of the total unique users were youth who were aged 15 to 24, and of this group, 75% are indigenous and 20% have complex needs.

First responders, overdose prevention facilities and emergency rooms have all endured massive costs, both monetary and emotional, because front-line service workers are experiencing high rates of burnout. This burnout means that we cannot recruit the people who are needed. It was actually nearly four years ago that B.C.'s medical health officer declared a public health emergency.

What I am asking today is that the federal government finally take note of this crisis, declare it a national health emergency and start giving communities like mine the assistance they need.

The other thing we need is for the federal government to take a leadership role and start tackling this crisis with innovative measures, such as decriminalization of possession of small amounts. It is time to stop using the criminal justice system to tackle a social problem and a health problem. We have to stop criminalizing people whose only crime is being addicted to drugs. They do not need the justice system. They do not need jail time. They need social services. They need health services. We need a federal government that is prepared to show the courage to bring in those types of measures.

The stigma associated with criminalization prevents many of these people from getting the help they need. Canada need only look to jurisdictions like Portugal, which in 2001 decriminalized small possession amounts and has shown an amazing turnaround. It has gone from a country that used to have one of the highest overdose death rates in all of Europe to a country with one of the lowest ones, where now people who are addicted to drugs are encouraged to come and get the help they need without fear of retribution from the criminal justice system.

Finally, in closing, another point is that the government has to start getting serious about providing a safe supply of drugs. It is the tainted street supply of drugs that is causing all of this death and destruction, and the longer we ignore this issue, the longer it is going to continue. This is causing huge amounts of damage, not only in the number of deaths but also in the survivors, such as people

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who have to deal with lifelong brain injuries as a result. Let us think about what the cost will be. It is being borne by families, by members of my community, by small business owners.

I am asking the federal government to take a look at those three things: declaring a national health emergency, decriminalizing small possession amounts, and making sure we have a safe supply so that we take leadership on this crisis and deliver the help that communities like mine actually need.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on a personal note, I want to thank the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. He gets this. He truly cares, and I want to thank him, not only for that passion and compassion, but also for the fact that he truly cares.

We are deeply concerned about Canada's opioid overdose crisis. New data released in December show that from January 2016 to June 2019, 13,913 people across this country have died as the result of opioid overdoses. While this number is staggering, we must not lose sight of the fact that this crisis impacts many more people than are reflected in the statistics. Each death affects families, friends, communities and loved ones, creating a loss felt by tens of thousands of people. This crisis is impacting all Canadians and is a national public health crisis of the highest priority.

This tragedy involves many factors; however, we know that the vast majority of overdose deaths are caused by illegally produced, highly toxic synthetic opioids like fentanyl and carfentanyl. The introduction of these substances into Canada's illegal drug market corresponds with the steep rise in overdose deaths. Therefore, an important element in our response to the crisis must be to address the smuggling of these toxic opioids into Canada.

We have responded by enacting new legislation, fast-tracking regulatory action, making investments and working collaboratively with other countries to prevent the smuggling of illicit drugs from countries like China. Prior to amendments to the Customs Act under Bill C-37, CBSA officers did not have the authority to inspect international packages weighing 30 grams or less without consent from the sender or addressee. For context, one 30-gram package can contain enough fentanyl to kill 15,000 people. Today, officers now have the authority to open any incoming package when they have reasonable grounds. We have also put in place scheduling amendments to restrict importation of chemicals used to produce fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances illegally. Additionally, our government has provided up to an additional \$76.2 million to address the opioid crisis and problematic substance use, bringing the total recent investment to more than \$100 million, including \$30.5 million from budget 2019.

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Because illegal drug trafficking knows no borders, international co-operation is also essential. Canada is working closely with international partners to prevent fentanyl and carfentanil from entering our country. Nowhere is our partnership stronger than with the United States. In fact, last June, the Prime Minister and President Trump reconfirmed our shared desire to address the overdose crisis ravaging Canada and the United States by committing to a joint action plan. Both countries are also working with the Chinese government to address the issue of illicitly produced fentanyl. The Government of Canada welcomed China's recent efforts to disrupt the illegal trafficking of fentanyl, as well as its addition of fentanyl-related substances to its supplementary list of controlled narcotics.

Enforcement to reduce the illegal drug supply is, however, just one component of our government's approach. If we are to turn the tide on this tragedy, we must commit to saving lives and supporting people who use drugs, and to improving their health and well-being. That is why our government restored harm reduction as a pillar of the Canadian drugs and substances strategy, approved more than 40 supervised consumption sites across the country, made naloxone available without a prescription and provided \$150 million through the emergency treatment fund to provinces and territories to improve access to evidence-based substances and treatment services. A further \$106.7 million was provided in budget 2019, which includes funding for pilot projects focused on pharmaceutical alternatives to the illegal drug market.

Our government recognizes—

• (1820)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his words, but I extend an invitation to him right here and now. If he and the Minister of Health want to come to my riding, they have an open invitation. I would be happy to introduce them to the Cowichan leadership group, which is made up of local political representatives from across the political spectrum.

I can say that we all, including the local mayors, the CVRD, the MLA and Island Health, stand united as a community in asking our federal government to do more. We have gone through this crisis over the last four years. The problem is a daily reminder.

I plead with him to listen to those in my community and local business groups when they say that we have a national health emergency. We need to move on with decriminalization and extend the provision of a safe supply of drugs. Our community needs this. I do not want to see any more people in my community harmed by this crisis. We need the federal government to step up.

• (1825)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his passion.

In the Speech from the Throne and in the minister's mandate letter, our government reaffirmed its commitment to making it easier for people struggling with problematic substance use to get help. We are working with the provinces and territories on new investments that expand community-based services, build more in-patient rehabilitation beds and scale up the most effective programs.

However, we know that stigma regarding substance abuse is hindering efforts to address the opioid overdose crisis. That is why one of our government's priorities in responding to the opioid crisis is to address this stigma. Under budget 2018, over \$13 million was invested in a national public awareness campaign to help change attitudes and perceptions about people who use drugs.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, so-called Canadian mining companies are destroying our nation's reputation around the world. The horrific impact of these companies is neither new nor surprising, given the lack of accountability of so-called Canadian companies when it comes to upholding human rights, labour rights and environmental rights in countries in which they operate.

Companies flying the Canadian flag choose to work in countries where the rule of law is weak, democracy is fragile, respect for human rights is tenuous, corruption can be rampant and accountability is non-existent. The absence of regulatory and institutional systems allows these mining companies to take advantage of these fragile and unstable countries, and vulnerable people suffer because of it. We have seen, over and over again, that these companies are allowed to operate in ways favourable to their bottom line while preventing the investigation of the human rights violations they perpetrate.

Two-thirds of the world's mining firms are currently incorporated in Canada. Can we imagine why that is? We have such lax oversight of these companies that, whether they are Canadian or not, they are incorporated here.

For far too long, we have allowed companies flying the Canadian flag to operate in developing countries without any accountability for serious human rights and environmental rights violations. Despite the government's claims, we are not protecting the most vulnerable populations and we are not holding these companies to account.

The late NDP member of Parliament, Paul Dewar, worked tirelessly, fighting for human rights in Canada and around the world. Paul demanded an ombudsman over a decade ago and the NDP has been fighting for this position ever since.

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Finally in 2018, the Liberal government created the ombudsman for responsible enterprise to oversee Canadian mining, oil and gas operations around the world. The ombudsman was mandated to review alleged human rights abuses arising from Canadian companies' operations abroad, make recommendations, monitor those recommendations, suggest trade measures for companies that do not co-operate in good faith, and report publicly throughout the process. This is not what is happening.

The Liberal government promised an independent ombudsperson with real powers to investigate abuses and redress harms caused by companies that fly the Canadian flag. Instead the powers of the ombudsman were watered down and the promises made by the government have not been kept. In fact, it is business as usual. Once again, the government has said all the right things but has done nothing to actually ensure accountability.

I have worked in international development for over 20 years and I have witnessed first-hand the profoundly damaging impacts that Canadian mining companies have abroad. I have stood in Nicaragua in front of a fence that says "go home Canada". I have spoken to mothers who have to give their children poisoned water because that is all they have. Mining companies flying the Canadian flag have poisoned the aquifer on which their communities depend.

I have been to Nicaragua, Peru and Ecuador. I have seen what has happened when we are not able to hold Canadian companies to account. I have seen how vulnerable people are impacted when these mining companies move in, their resources are pulled out, their environment is irreparably damaged and the communities are left to suffer.

Independent and respected organizations like Amnesty International and the United Nations have identified widespread abuses by Canadian companies. Those include targeted assassinations, gang rape, violence against unarmed protesters and the use of slave labour.

When Canadians learn about what these companies are doing, they are shocked. They cannot believe that our government would sit idly by and let these abuses happen. Canadians—

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the parliamentary secretary the opportunity to answer.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada is committed to adopting responsible business conduct here and around the world. Canadian businesses are recognized as world leaders and known for their positive contributions to the communities in which they operate.

Responsible business conduct is not the same as corporate social responsibility, for it goes beyond a philanthropic approach. Rather, it requires businesses to take action to prevent and deal with any negative repercussions they create.

[*English*]

Our government and all Canadians expect our companies abroad to operate at the highest of standards. This means respecting human rights, addressing climate change and ensuring environmental protections, and conducting their business in a way that is very much in line with our Canadian values.

Canada's approach to responsible business conduct includes both preventative measures and dispute resolution mechanisms, namely the Canadian ombudsman for responsible enterprise and the national contact point for the OECD guidelines for multinationals.

[*Translation*]

In April 2019, our government appointed Sheri Meyerhoffer as the Canadian ombudsperson for responsible enterprise, the first position of its kind in the world.

The ombudsperson's mandate includes promoting international guidelines, working with Canadian businesses on their practices and policies, and reviewing any claims of alleged human rights abuses arising from the operations of Canadian companies abroad in the mining, oil and gas, and garment sectors.

The ombudsperson can also provide informal mediation services and advise the minister on any issue.

[*English*]

The ombudsperson for responsible enterprise complements Canada's pre-existing voluntary dispute resolution mechanism, Canada's national contact point.

In addition to offering dispute resolution, the national contact point also promotes the implementation of the OECD guidelines, the most comprehensive set of international standards for the business community.

The OECD guidelines are applicable to all sectors and cover multiple issues, such as disclosure, employment and labour relations, human rights, the environment and corruption.

Canada's dispute settlement mechanisms are robust. Not collaborating in good faith could result in recommendations by the ombudsperson or the NCP to deny or withdraw enhanced trade advocacy support and future Export Development Canada financial support.

[*Translation*]

By further strengthening Canada's commitment to responsible business conduct, our government is renewing its strategy in this area. The renewed strategy will provide a basis for strengthening Canada's leadership in responsible business conduct.

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[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, with all due respect, to talk about promoting, advising and examining is not what we are talking about here. We need to have an ombudsman who actually has the ability to make decisions, to compel witnesses, to have judicial powers.

The idea that we are going to sit back and advise companies that it would be nice if they did not abuse human rights around the world while flying the Canadian flag and it would be pleasant if we could ensure that women and families are not forced to drink poisoned water is not enough. We need an ombudsperson who has teeth. Canadians need to see action when it comes to this.

To say that our businesses are accountable, that they are operating lawfully and responsibly is false. They are not. This is a lie. I think all Canadians would be shocked and disappointed in the Liberal government to know how little it thinks about our reputation around the world.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, our government is committed to demonstrating leadership around the world on respon-

sible business conduct. We are taking action. We are engaging with companies early to prevent problems from arising, while also providing access to remedies when issues do occur.

Part of leadership is taking ownership over our problems, and we know we can strive to do even more. That is why our approach includes both prevention and access to dispute resolution and remedy.

● (1835)

[Translation]

Engaging in responsible business conduct is a key contribution of the private sector to supporting the implementation of Canada's agenda for sustainable development goals.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:35 p.m.)

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