



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 076

Friday, May 20, 2022

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 20, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

AN ACT FOR THE SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY OF CANADA'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

BILL C-13—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the Bill; and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

[*English*]

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

The hon. official opposition House leader.

• (1005)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am certainly not surprised that we are at this point of time allocation by the government considering it is being aided and abetted by the NDP, a party, by the way, that used to rail against time allocation every time it came up in the last Parliament, the Parliament before that and Parliaments before that. As the now moderate wing of the Liberal Party, the NDP is furthering a decline in democracy.

Millions of people voted for opposition parties other than the NDP. Those voices are being silenced as these types of things happen, and it is unfortunate that we are seeing a further decline in our

democracy. There is a decline in the faith people have in our institutions when these types of tactics are employed by the government, aided and abetted by its lapdogs in the NDP.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, first and foremost, it is just the opposite. Over the past number of weeks, we have seen many tactics being used by this opposition party. The reason we are moving forward with this today is that we really want to make sure we can move forward with this important piece of legislation.

Bill C-13 would make a real difference in the lives of Canadians, and I am now looking forward to seeing the important work the committee is going to be able to do. We certainly recognize that committees here work independently. They are able to look at bills and move forward with calling in witnesses. From there, we will be able to continue this very important discussion on Bill C-13.

Bill C-13, as I indicated, would make huge differences in the lives of those in official minority communities across this country. That is why it is so important that we move forward. Canadians expect that of us.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, the previous version of the bill to reform the Official Languages Act was introduced at the end of the previous Parliament by the member for Ahuntsic-Cartierville. We did not really have a chance to debate it since the government had taken almost two years to introduce it. This time, the government introduced the bill and then quickly moved to cut off debate.

The government was taken to court in British Columbia for failing to provide British Columbians with services in French, basically violating its own legislation. Then the government appointed a unilingual anglophone lieutenant governor in one of the Atlantic provinces. The government appears to be trying to hide the fact that it is really struggling to enforce the use of French.

Is that why the government is once again cutting off debate in an affront to democracy?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, just the opposite is true.

Our government is firmly committed to protecting and promoting French across the country, including in Quebec. We recognize that there has been a decline in the use of French across the country, including in Quebec. That is why we are moving forward with this new version of our bill.

Government Orders

The former Bill C-32 was introduced last June. Since being appointed Minister of Official Languages, I have had the good fortune and privilege of meeting many of the people who have been working on this file for years. Based on the information we have received, we can say that they are very happy with the new version of the bill, which they think has more teeth.

That is why we really want to ensure that parliamentarians can continue the debate at the Standing Committee on Official Languages and move Bill C-13 forward.

I would remind the House that following the committee study, the bill will come back to the House before going to the Senate. I look forward to ensuring that this great bill receives royal assent as soon as possible.

• (1010)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, roughly eight months ago, we had a federal election. That was not very long ago. It is not a stretch to think that we could take more time to study Bill C-13.

That said, francophone communities outside Quebec have been waiting for the modernization of the Official Languages Act for 30 years, not eight months. Let us not forget how critical this file is for them and their vitality, as well as for cultural institutions, positive measures and francophone immigration.

What does the minister think about the fact that these people cannot wait any longer for things to improve?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I want my colleague to know that he is absolutely right.

Official language minority communities have been waiting a long time for the modernization of the Official Languages Act that Bill C-13 offers them.

Our new version of the former bill has more teeth. As I have said it many times, Bill C-13 will make a real difference in the lives of Canadians from coast to coast to coast, including official language minority communities.

As a francophone living in one such community, it is partly thanks to the Official Languages Act that I had the privilege or the right to live in French, attend university in French and work in French. However, we want to make sure we go further by clarifying the definition of part VII in order to achieve substantive equality. We will continue to work on advancing our language rights.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a francophone from Quebec, I concur with the government that Bill C-13 is extremely important. It is not a question of debating the timing of its introduction, because I do not believe there is a right or wrong time. As my colleague stated earlier, I believe that today, the time has come to move forward.

However, I do have a question for the minister. At what point in this process do we need the support of the other parties to demonstrate to Canadians that we have two official languages and that it is important to protect French in a minority context?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, all members of the House share the objective of protecting our two official lan-

guages and ensuring that we do everything possible to protect the French language, given that we recognize that French is in decline in Canada, including in Quebec.

That is why we have worked tirelessly with our partners and stakeholders from across the country, who wanted to improve former Bill C-32. That is exactly what we did to come up with a new version, Bill C-13.

It is very important to remember that all members of the House must work in close co-operation. As I mentioned, our common goal is to pass Bill C-13, which, I repeat, will make a real difference in the lives of official language minority communities.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I like what my colleague, the Minister of Official Languages, is saying, but the government is not walking the talk.

In my opinion, Bill C-13 is very important because it establishes rules to ensure that, in 50 years, Canada will still be a bilingual country, where both French and English are spoken.

The minister is from New Brunswick, the only bilingual province in Canada, yet she is supporting her government as it argues against including a requirement in the act stating that the Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick must be bilingual. I am having a hard time understanding the logic behind what she is saying.

Furthermore, the minister said that stakeholders were happy with what had been done with Bill C-13. Indeed, it is a step forward, but when I met with the same stakeholders, they told me that it was not enough.

We do need to work on it, but in a democracy like the Canadian Parliament, all parliamentarians must be respected, be given the right to speak and be allowed to express themselves, because this is a very important bill for the future of bilingualism in Canada.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, let us get one thing straight right off the bat. This is day four of debate on Bill C-13. There have been 63 speeches in the House about this bill: 19 by the Conservative Party, 18 by the Liberal Party, 13 by the NDP and 12 by the Bloc Québécois.

Let us not forget that, even though a big part of the work is done in the House, a lot is done in committee as well. Committee work is very important. I also know that my hon. colleague is a member of the committee, which does great work, often working very closely with all the parties. That does not mean we always agree, but some great work gets done.

At this point, we are very eager for the parliamentary committee to get going on this so the bill can then come back to the House.

Government Orders

• (1015)

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I would like to ask the minister a question. The government says it recognizes the decline of French in Canada and Quebec, especially in Montreal. However, this bill would give people in Quebec the choice to speak English or French. Quebec is the only place where the official language is French, yet the government wants to give people the choice to speak English.

I would like my colleague to explain how we are supposed to protect French when Bill C-13 gives federally regulated companies the choice to speak English or French.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, once again, our government is the first to recognize that French is in decline in Canada, including Quebec. That is why we are moving forward with an ambitious bill. We also must recognize that the Bloc Québécois does not represent all of Canada's francophones.

As Minister of Official Languages, I want to ensure that I am putting in place a bill that will respect official language minority communities across the country. That is why I am very pleased to move forward with this ambitious bill that will make a real difference in the lives of those residing in such communities.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have seen in the course of last few weeks that we have two blocs in the House of Commons: the Bloc Québécois and the “block everything party”. The “block everything party” has been the Conservative Party.

We have seen its members systematically blocking every single piece of legislation, refusing to have legislation go through to committee to improve it. These are fundamentally important things, yet what we saw this week was absolutely a travesty. Conservative MPs, when we extended hours so that everyone could speak to important legislation, decided they wanted the House of Commons—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to interrupt the member, but the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, right now, the House is debating Bill C-13. We are not debating procedure.

I do not need a lecture from the NDP—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is debate, not a point of order.

[English]

The hon. parliamentary secretary has a point of order. As it is on the same point of order, I will say that I ruled it is not a point of order, so I do not think we need further discussion.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby can wrap up.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party blocks everything. Why are the Conservatives refusing to refer this bill to committee so the committee can improve it?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As I said, this is the fourth day of debate. At midnight on May 12, I was still in the House, and I was quite disappointed to see the Conservative Party move an amendment and an amendment to the amendment that could have killed this bill. Believe it or not, people watch CPAC at midnight, and several people called me to say they were worried about the Conservative Party's interventions.

I repeat: We do not want to play political games. This bill is very important to me, and I want to see it passed as soon as possible. The parliamentary committee has work to do. I am eager to get this bill to committee so it can do its study and get it back to the House for another round of debate. I am also eager for the Senate to be able to do its work, which is very important too.

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am a member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, along with some of my colleagues currently in the House, whether virtually or in person. I can confirm that this committee has the best team, across party lines, to carry Bill C-13 forward and do exactly what we hope to achieve with it.

I would like to hear more from the minister about what she has heard from stakeholders from coast to coast to coast, wherever they are located in our big, beautiful Canada, about this new version of the legislation.

• (1020)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my friend and colleague from Madawaska—Restigouche for his hard work on this file. I know he has spent a good part of his life working to advance the cause of official languages. He is doing an excellent job as chair of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Since I was appointed minister, I have had the privilege of meeting stakeholders from coast to coast to coast. People are telling us that they want Bill C-13 to move forward. The feedback we received on the new version of the bill was generally very positive. People appreciate the work we have done. Stakeholders have also told us that they are eager for us to start working on the regulatory framework. Of course we want the bill to pass, but there will be more work to do after that, because the associated regulations need to be developed. Let us not forget that we have an action plan and some consultations coming up soon. We want to prepare our work plan for the next five years. Passing Bill C-13 is one of the steps we hope to accomplish soon.

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I want to commend my colleague, the chair of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. We are working together to advance the cause.

Government Orders

We now have the proof that this government is not really paying attention to the French language and has no real intention of protecting it. I would remind members that the first speech, the first debate, was on a Wednesday afternoon. I want to make people at home aware of this. Wednesday afternoons and Friday mornings are the two periods of the week when a member has less speaking time. The last time there was an intervention on this topic was on Thursday.

It is clear that we are in the process of pushing this bill through. This upsets the senior members of the Liberal Party, of the government in place. Unfortunately, the Minister of Official Languages is David against Goliath in her own party. If we look at what happened this week in the news, we see that three Liberal MPs are disputing the Liberal government's decision.

I would like to hear the minister's thoughts on that.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, what truly concerns me is that the Conservative Party is trying to derail this bill.

Last Thursday, the opposition criticized me for being here until midnight talking about this. Canadians expect us to be in the House to do our work as MPs, whether that is Monday morning or Friday afternoon. That is exactly what we are doing by debating this bill.

This is an ambitious bill, since we want to be sure to do everything we can to protect both of this country's beautiful official languages. I hope that we will have the co-operation of my colleagues from all parties.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the Minister of Official Languages. She is very involved and believes in her commitments.

However, I sincerely believe that the government appointment of a unilingual anglophone lieutenant governor in New Brunswick, the only bilingual province, sends the wrong message. That message conveys that the government does not care about French in minority situations, including in New Brunswick.

The minister says that the government promises never to do this again, but it just did. Furthermore, it is defending the right to do this before the courts. How can she justify that?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the question. I have a great deal of regard for him as well.

Our government is firmly committed to doing everything it can to promote and protect both our beautiful official languages in Canada. That is a priority. I have also stated many times that we agree with the principle that the lieutenant governors of New Brunswick must be bilingual. All of Ms. Murphy's successors will be. We have stated that and we will absolutely abide by it.

What is before the courts is a constitutional matter. It has nothing to do with the principle of the bilingualism of future lieutenant governors. We have made it clear that we will absolutely ensure that the lieutenant governors of New Brunswick appointed after Ms. Murphy will be bilingual.

• (1025)

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, we saw this week the travesty of an evening session where parliamentarians were supposed to get together and speak to important legislation, but the Conservatives turned it into a circus where debate was over which Conservative faction would put forward its speaker. It was lamentable. I have not seen, in my years in Parliament, an entire party say to the people of Canada that what is most important is its internal stuff rather than talk about important debates. We have seen bill after bill blocked by the Conservatives.

Why are the Conservatives blocking everything? Why, on a bill as important as official languages, are they refusing to get it to committee so hearings can be held and the legislation improved? These are all things I would think every member of Parliament should take to heart.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, we have to recognize that, yes, important debate happens in the House, but important debate and work also happens at the committee level. That is exactly where we are hoping this work is going to go. We want the committee members to look at this legislation with a fine-tooth comb, because we want to have the best legislation possible. We recognize the Official Languages Act has not been revised substantially over the past 30 years, so Canadians are expecting us to do a really good job and their expectations are very high.

What we saw this week in Parliament, with respect to the Conservative Party playing games, was really disheartening. I know that when my colleagues and people at home are watching this they wonder what is going on here. When we hear bells ringing every 30 minutes and the motion we have to vote on is which Conservative speaker is going to speak next, people wonder if that is really what we are doing here in Ottawa. People really want to see the work and debate being done constructively, and I certainly hope we are going to have the co-operation of all members as we move forward with this really important piece of legislation.

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill C-13.

As an Acadian from Nova Scotia who worked on the ground in the field of education for 30 some years, I was able to witness firsthand the challenges we face in advancing French in our official language minority communities.

We have known about these issues for 30 years, and we know that something needs to be done to remedy them. We have taken some action over the past five or 10 years, namely with the Translation Bureau, the court challenges program, services in French and bilingual judges in the Supreme Court of Canada. Those are all very important things.

Government Orders

Positive measures are essential, and the courts are saying that we need to do more in that regard. Does the minister think that Bill C-13 responds to this request from the courts?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I would like to once again thank my colleague who has been working in this field for several decades. I am extremely grateful to him for that and for the work that he does here in Ottawa as the chair of the official languages caucus.

Positive measures are indeed a very important part of Bill C-13. The stakeholders we spoke to really wanted to see improvements in the definition and handling of positive measures compared to former Bill C-32. That is exactly what we did.

We took care to closely examine every word and every comma in our new bill because we want to ensure that it will really help official language minority communities. We want the positive measures to be clearly defined, because they are a very important component.

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I think the Minister of Official Languages needs to understand that this issue is very important to the Conservative Party of Canada, and it is something we want to work on.

If she had listened to my speech during the first day of debate in the House of Commons, during which she gave parliamentarians the privilege of speaking, I made it clear that the Conservative Party was reaching out to the government to improve this bill.

This bill is a step forward, but we need to keep moving. This is important, because now is the time to take action to halt the decline of French.

Unfortunately, if this version of Bill C-13 were to be implemented tomorrow morning, it would do nothing to halt the decline of French. If the government allows parliamentarians to speak, it will get suggestions to improve the bill in the interests of our two official languages.

• (1030)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I think we share the same goal of improving the bill and ultimately protecting and promoting our official languages. This debate will continue in committee, which is exactly what we want. We want to have a constructive debate with the members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages so we can produce the best version of the bill. The Official Languages Act has not been reviewed in depth in some 30 years.

We want to ensure that discussions continue so we can come up with a bill that the House of Commons can pass.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Speaker, I am hoping the minister can explain something to me. How will bilingualism ensure the equality of French and English? That has been the very objective of the Official Languages Act since it was created.

How can the minister explain that outside Quebec only 6% of anglophones are bilingual, whereas in Quebec almost 40% of francophones are bilingual? It seems that bilingualism only exists there. As Pierre Bourgault said so well, bilingualism is making people believe that a rabbit and a lion in the same cage are equals.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, if we look at the components of Bill C-32, our action plan and Bill C-13, it is clear that the common thread is the desire to achieve substantive equality. That is why we are going further with our bill. We want to ensure that we make our contribution to achieving substantive equality. It will not happen overnight. We recognize that French is in decline in this country. French is in decline in Canada. That is why we are moving forward with an ambitious bill. We absolutely want to correct this situation.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is an organization in my riding, London—Fanshawe, called Planète Solidarité that offers services in French for children.

[*English*]

I have forgotten the word in French, but for children with autism disabilities and issues with autism, and to provide those services for their parents and children in French.

How would this bill help with the people who are fighting in that organization in my riding, Planète Solidarité?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. It is very important to our government to support organizations in official language minority communities. If we want to sustain the vitality of these communities, we must make the necessary investments. Ever since coming to power, our government has made historic investments in all areas of official languages. Our government will continue to do the work that needs to be done.

I am very much looking forward to starting the national consultations on developing the next action plan, which will enable us to develop a road map for the next five years. I am really looking forward to our cross-Canada consultations.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it appears that the Conservatives do not even know what we are debating right now, based on the point of order that came earlier. The suggestion was that we were debating Bill C-13. We are not. We are actually debating a motion to time allocate it, because we have to: It is a position that the Conservatives have put us in.

Government Orders

The member for New Westminster—Burnaby actually was spotted as to why we are in the situation that we are in: Conservatives are just putting up person after person for no reason other than to obstruct this Parliament. We saw that on Monday night, when they put up speaker after speaker on a bill that they supposedly support.

Can the minister please explain to the House how she sees the difficulties coming from the other side?

• (1035)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, again, I think that we recognize that Bill C-13 is a really important piece of legislation. Yes, debate has happened in the House. This is the fourth day, but we want this debate to continue. There have been a lot of games that have been played over the past number of weeks, and we certainly do not want to see this bill stalled. Canadians are expecting us to take action when it comes to official languages, and people are watching this debate very closely.

That is why we are moving forward with making sure that we finish the debate today in the House. From there, the committees will be able to do the important work that they have to do.

The committee's work is independent. It is going to be able to look at this bill and make the proper assessment of it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, how does the minister feel today knowing that the House is debating Bill C-13 while government lawyers are preparing a court challenge against francophones in British Columbia?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, as the Minister for Official Languages, I am very pleased to present Bill C-13. As I mentioned, I hope that the debates will continue so that our bill can be improved.

However, this is the fourth day of debate in the House, and the Standing Committee on Official Languages will continue the work. I look forward to closely following this debate.

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

[*English*]

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

The hon. member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, I request that the motion be carried on division.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

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

• (1120)

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

(*Division No. 102*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Ali
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fry	Gaheer
Garneau	Garrison
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gould	Green
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
McPherson	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Miller	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan

Petipas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Saks
Sarai
Schieffe
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid

Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Spengemann
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo— 168

Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Shiple
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Thériault
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Vignola
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer— 131

Statements by Members

Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Shields
Simard
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Villemure
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

PAIRED

Nil

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

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, there has been consultation among the parties and I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, the House do now proceed to Statements by Members followed by Oral Questions, and that the usual allotment of time be afforded for each rubric.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay. Hearing none, it is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

THE EAST COAST TRAIL

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in my beautiful riding of St. John's East, 336 kilometres of magnificent hiking trails await. The East Coast Trail is made up of 25 hiking paths, and along it we see towering cliffs and headlands, sea stacks, fjords, and a natural wave-driven geyser. There are also seabird colonies, whales, icebergs, historic sites and a 50-metre suspension bridge.

There is no better way to see the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Newfoundland and Labrador's eastern edge than the East Coast Trail. Since 1994, the East Coast Trail Association has worked to reopen trails that have linked communities for generations.

NAYS

Members

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Beaulieu
Bergen
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont
Desilets
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Findlay
Gallant
Gaudreau
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Kelly
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Larouche
Lemire
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
MacKenzie
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Rayes
Rempel Garner

Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Benzen
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Deltell
Desbiens
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Fortin
Garon
Généreux
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Jeneroux
Kmicic
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Maguire
Mazier
McLean
Morrice
Motz
Nater
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Reid
Richards

Statements by Members

I am pleased to share that an additional 52 kilometres of trails and three paths from Topsail Beach to Cape St. Francis has now been opened. The trail raiser community hike will be in full force on June 4, and I invite everyone to come to the East Coast Trail.

* * *

NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE WEEK

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, this week is Naturopathic Medicine Week. As a chiropractor myself, I understand and have seen first-hand what Canada's incredible naturopathic doctors do. Canada's naturopathic doctors are primary care providers and experts in natural medicine. Naturopathic medicine blends the healing power of nature with modern scientific knowledge to offer a new perspective on safe and effective ways to restore health.

Focusing on health promotion and disease prevention, naturopathic doctors work with patients to identify the root causes of disease and to identify all the factors that are affecting their health. Addressing a variety of health concerns including acute and chronic conditions, naturopathic medicine can ease symptoms and help to reduce the use of prescription medications, making it a valuable complement to conventional treatments.

Especially as we emerge from the COVID-19 virus, I am asking all members of the House to join me in thanking our naturopathic doctors for all they have been doing to help patients in their communities across Canada.

* * *

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge a dedicated physician, Dr. Joseph Lawen, who recently announced his upcoming retirement. I have known Dr. Lawen and his family for a long time through his involvement in our community and through his church, Saint Antונים.

During his 33 years as a urologist in Halifax, his work has had an immeasurable impact on his patients and their families across Atlantic Canada. Throughout his career, he has performed over 2,000 kidney transplants, more than any other transplant surgeon at the QEII. He has been a true pioneer, constantly developing his expertise in a very complex surgical procedure.

Though he intended to retire in 2019, Dr. Lawen stayed on another three years to mentor his successor. He has also trained over 50 fellows, hundreds of residents and many more medical students. He also inspired his eldest son, Tarek, to follow in his footsteps.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Dr. Lawen for his remarkable career and service.

* * *

● (1125)

VIOLENT CRIME

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of young women in my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam who have expressed to me sincere concern regarding the Supreme Court of Canada ruling on self-induced intoxication in cases of violent crimes.

cern regarding the Supreme Court of Canada ruling on self-induced intoxication in cases of violent crimes.

Youth-led, non-profit BOLT Safety Society wrote to me stating, “Court decision threatens Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights, which affirms everyone the right to life, liberty and security. In no manner does defending perpetrators for their conscious choice of self-intoxication guarantee Canadians this right, and this bolsters a dangerous narrative in a justice system that is built upon precedents”.

In Canada, there are five million survivors of sexual assault. With this ruling, figures are set to boom, putting more woman, girls and LGBTQ2+ Canadians at risk as overwhelmingly the defendants are men and the victims are women. The gaps in this law relating to self-induced intoxication need to be amended immediately.

* * *

[Translation]

55TH QUEBEC GAMES

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over 3,300 young athletes from across the province will be participating in the 55th Quebec Games in Laval from July 22 to July 30.

The Quebec Games are more than just a competition. They are an excellent opportunity to celebrate sports and sportsmanship. This event enables young people from everywhere in Quebec to show off their talent in their favourite sport and to build relationships with their peers. It is an unforgettable and life-changing experience.

These athletes will serve as an inspiration to young people in Laval through their discipline and perseverance. It is an honour for our city to host such an event.

Let us play together. Sports unite us.

I encourage the people of Laval to come out in great numbers to cheer on our athletes. To the athletes, I say that nothing is impossible with hope and hard work. Game on, Laval.

[English]

PADDLING AND ROWING IN DARTMOUTH—COLE HARBOUR

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is paddling and rowing season in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. Folks from all walks of life are getting their canoes and their kayaks out and heading out onto the incredible lakes and waterways. There is a reason why Dartmouth is called the “City of Lakes”. We are home to the world's very best competition course, historic Lake Banook. In fact, this beautiful lake will host incredible competitions this year, such as Canoe '22, and the ICF Canoe Sprint and Paracanoe World Championships.

In Dartmouth, folks do not ask if one paddles, they ask where one paddles. From Abenaki to Senobe, North Star to Banook and, of course, to my home club, Mic Mac, we have incredible aquatic clubs that inspire kids to enjoy sports, and to even become Olympic athletes.

I wish Dartmouth—Cole Harbour a safe and incredible paddling and rowing season in 2022.

* * *

VACCINE MANDATES

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, the irrational stubbornness of the government when it comes to vaccine mandates is frustrating to a broad range of Canadians. Whether it is federal public sector unions, the tourism and travel industry, military and RCMP members or Canadians who just want to travel, they want the government to end the mandates. Continuing to impose mandates is causing stress and hardship. Businesses are hurt as interprovincial and international travel is more difficult.

One example is Josh, a farmer in my riding, who is at risk of losing hundreds of thousands of dollars due to the uncertainty of international travel. Whether impacted financially or not by the federal mandates, all Canadians are negatively impacted by the divisiveness of the Prime Minister.

Regardless of their vaccination status, many feel like the government has created two classes of citizens. This has to stop. Canada needs to join the rest of the world and get back to normal.

* * *

• (1130)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mrs. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am deeply proud of the deep telecom history and innovation in my riding of Kanata—Carleton. The decision to prohibit Huawei and ZTE from accessing and developing within Canada's 5G networks is the right decision, as 5G is a critical piece of Canada's digital infrastructure. As 5G technology becomes more prevalent, our government must be stringent about which trusted partners have access to our highly integrated technological realm.

Prohibiting foreign firms such as Huawei and ZTE from accessing our network will reinforce the confidence and integrity of our

Statements by Members

telecommunications industry. It will invite continued partnership and development from trusted firms.

I look forward to the forthcoming legislative framework to codify Canada's commitment and protect our telecommunications industry from exploitation.

* * *

MULLIVAICKAL REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, May 18 was Mullivaikkal Remembrance Day. This year marks the 13th anniversary of the genocide, where tens of thousands of lives were tragically lost near the end of the Sri Lankan civil war. The Tamil diaspora in Canada has a rich history and is deeply connected to our communities all across the country. Many of them came to Canada because of the civil war and to start a new life in safety, free from persecution and violence.

On May 18, we remember the pain, the loss and brutality faced by Tamil Canadians and Tamils. We remember all of those who disappeared and were murdered. As we observe Mullivaikkal Remembrance Day, we must commit ourselves to stand with all Tamil people in the search for truth and justice. We join in the desire to create a more just world, free from this inhumane and shameful violence.

* * *

GRADUATING CLASS OF 2022

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yesterday and today, Cape Breton University hosted their spring convocation ceremonies, celebrating the class of 2022. As a CBU graduate myself, I welcome the new class to the Cape Breton University alumni family. I have no doubt that this is just the beginning of a long road of success, happiness and well-being for each of them.

On behalf of all members in the House, I would like to extend a congratulations to the graduating class on achieving a huge milestone today. Each graduate has shown immense resiliency in this chapter while navigating the new world of online learning and doing all of that during a global pandemic.

I would like to extend a special congratulations to two members of my team: Natasha Kochhar, graduating with her MBA, and Madlyn O'Brien, graduating with her bachelor of arts in political science. Both Madlyn and Natasha committed to finishing their degrees while working exceptionally hard for the people of Cape Breton—Canso. I extend my thanks to them and to the graduating class.

*Statements by Members***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is never a good thing when the government turns a blind eye to violence, especially if it is politically motivated. The character of our nation is at greater risk if there is any perception of a double standard based on political bias and interests. Canadians do not want to go down that dangerous path.

On February 17, we saw a vicious attack on the Coastal GasLink work camp in British Columbia. A mob of masked attackers carried torches and flare guns, and wielded axes, causing millions of dollars in damage. There have been reports of ongoing damage to vehicles and private property linked to executives of the bank that is funding the project. Destroying property can all too easily spread to harming human life as well, and it inspires similar crimes.

Despite a lot of talk about an investigation by over 40 RCMP officers, we have seen no action from the current government, not like we saw with its reaction to the bouncy castles and hot tubs here in Ottawa. With its so-called emergency out of the way, it is time for the Liberals to get serious and deal with real crime and violence.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, virtual Parliament was meant to be a temporary measure to deal with a worldwide pandemic, but it has the effect of reducing the accountability of government. That is fine with the current Prime Minister and his cabal, but it should not be fine with Canadians.

As workers across the country are back at work, is it not a little rich for the government to insist that it is not safe to do our work in person? We are no more special than the rest of Canadians. Trying to represent our constituents from the comfort of our homes just does not cut it. Continuing with a hybrid parliament diminishes this institution.

Conservatives believe it is time to get democracy working again. The Prime Minister and his NDP-Liberal government have demonstrated repeatedly that they are willing to do anything to avoid the oversight of Parliament. Virtual sittings reduce accountability and transparency in our democratic parliamentary system. We have seen it clearly in question period, where answers to serious questions are obfuscated at best.

This needs to end now, so we can bring back a real democratic Parliament to Canadians.

* * *

● (1135)

[Translation]

FIRE DEPARTMENT IN GREATER LONGUEUIL AREA

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Service de sécurité incendie de l'agglomération de Longueuil recently received a 2022 municipal award for excellence in the special COVID-19 category from the Union des municipalités du Québec. The Longueuil fire department

was being honoured for its role in coordinating municipal emergency preparedness organizations in response to COVID-19.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the department implemented a regional governance framework and held meetings to coordinate decision-making, co-operation and alignment in the greater Longueuil area.

[English]

The department's leadership and professionalism during this unprecedented time has benefited all citizens of the agglomeration.

[Translation]

I congratulate the Service de sécurité incendie de l'agglomération de Longueuil, its director, Jean Melançon, and all of its members on winning this fantastic award.

I want to thank all of them on behalf of the people of Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, can members imagine going to school hungry? They would have a hard time concentrating. The sound of the teacher's voice would be a dull rumble in their stomachs. They would be feeling tired, and they would barely have the energy to lift their pencils. That is the reality for nearly two million children in Canada. Right here at home, one in three children is at risk of going to school hungry.

Canada is the only G7 nation without a national school food program. UNICEF ranked Canada 37 out of 41 industrialized countries for food security among children.

Canada is a wealthy nation, yet our children are going hungry every day. We can change all of that. I am calling on the Liberal government to adopt the NDP private member's bill to develop a national school food program. All children deserve a chance to succeed.

* * *

[Translation]

CHRISTIAN OUELLET

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, the passing of former Bloc Québécois MP Christian Ouellet will be marked in Bromont this Saturday, May 21.

He was first elected in 2006 in the riding of Brome—Missisquoi at the venerable age of 72 and was re-elected in 2008. He decided to take his well-deserved retirement in 2011. His love for Quebec always guided his choices and his commitment. He was my political mentor.

He started out as an architect specializing in green architecture and was even named a fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada for his commitment to promoting green buildings. He was a formidable and extremely competent deputy critic for the environment and natural resources. Mr. Ouellet connected with his constituents and cared deeply about his fellow human beings. This made him a thoughtful critic for social housing and homelessness. Mr. Ouellet had an open and inquiring mind and was ahead of his time in many ways. The most important thing I learned from him was when he said to me, “Andréanne, once you are elected, you will represent everyone”.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to extend our deepest condolences to his wife, Estelle, his family and his loved ones.

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[English]

THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, 2022 marks the 70th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's reign over the Commonwealth. To celebrate, in the absence of any formal federal recognition with a platinum jubilee medal, I will be awarding 70 specially designed platinum jubilee commemorative medallions to volunteers in Barrie—Innisfil who have gone above and beyond to selflessly help the residents and communities of Barrie—Innisfil.

Over the past month, since we put out the call for nominations, my office has received amazing stories of these volunteers, and I am not in the least surprised by it. I encourage residents to nominate a deserving volunteer by visiting my website, johnbrassard.com. Over the summer, I will personally deliver these special medallions to these special volunteers.

As we head into the first long weekend of the summer, I want to wish everyone a safe and restful weekend. I wish a happy Victoria Day to all members of this House and every resident of Barrie—Innisfil. God save the Queen and long may she reign.

* * *

JAMES QUONG

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Jimmy Quong came to the Yukon literally to build bridges. A practice-trained engineer, James moved up from Vancouver in 1942 to design bridges for the Alaska Highway that connected Dawson Creek, B.C. to Fairbanks, Alaska in an astounding eight months. One hundred and thirty-four beloved bridges later, Jimmy Quong's legacy expands from the Dempster Highway to Nisutlin Bay, to the Marsh Lake bridge and the magnificent Skagway road connecting Carcross to Alaska.

Jimmy brought his keen eye for detail to photography, illuminating scenes of the Yukon from the forties onward: roads and bridges, paddle wheelers, buildings and the people of his time. His meticu-

Oral Questions

lous photographs now tell the Yukon's story in museums and archives around the territory. When I first arrived in the Yukon, in a frigid January in 1995, one of the first to welcome me was Dr. Ken Quong, Jimmy's son, now a respected medical leader and a skilled photographer in his own right.

As we commemorate Asian Heritage Month, I salute the life of Jimmy Quong, whose bridges, photographs and family form part of the Yukon's vital fabric.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1140)

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, by calling anyone who disagrees with his reckless policies a racist, this Prime Minister is playing a dangerous game. He should know that even some of his most loyal MPs have had enough with that cop-out, because it is getting harder and harder for them to explain it to their constituents.

He calls us racist because we know how bad Bill C-5 is. If passed, it would reduce the number of prisoners in federal penitentiaries by leaving dangerous offenders in our communities. Am I to assume that the Prime Minister also thinks Laval police chief Pierre Brochet is racist?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to be very clear: Those who commit serious offences will continue to receive serious sentences.

[English]

Our bill is about getting rid of the failed policies of the Conservative government, which have filled our prisons with low-risk first-time offenders who needed help, not to be put in jail. These failed policies did not deter crime and did not keep us safe. They target vulnerable and racialized Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, when the Prime Minister calls racist for opposing this dangerous law, he does not realize that, by the same token, he is accusing members of his own caucus of the same thing.

Bill C-5 is nothing more than a public relations exercise that seeks to reduce incarceration statistics by letting violent criminals go free when they should be behind bars.

Since the Prime Minister likes to brag about having Canadians' support, is he aware that Stéphane Wall from the Communauté des citoyens en action contre les criminels violents said, and I quote, “There is absolutely a dichotomy between Bill C-5 and the social context of gun violence”?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me repeat: Those who commit serious offences will continue to receive serious sentences. Our government is committed to our criminal justice system reform. It is a promise we made to Canadians, and we intend to keep it. This is about criminal justice policy that actually keeps our communities safe. A justice system that unfairly targets indigenous peoples and Black and marginalized communities is not effective, does not keep us safe and must be changed.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, Anie Samson is a former city councillor and member of the City of Montreal's executive committee who was responsible for public safety. She said, and I quote, "What does Bill C-5 do to protect our young people and deter them from taking this path? It does absolutely nothing to deter them, in fact. Abolishing certain MMPs simply exacerbates impunity for these kinds of acts."

Would the Prime Minister have us believe that the Laval police chief, the Communauté des citoyens en action contre les criminels violents and Anie Samson are all racist?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a justice system that targets indigenous peoples, the Black community and marginalized individuals is not fair, does not keep us safe and needs to be changed.

[English]

I invite the member opposite to listen to the testimony of the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers, the Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers and the South Asian Bar Association, as well as many legal experts who have come forward in support of this bill.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have recently seen the Supreme Court interpret current law as allowing extreme intoxication as a valid defence against violent crimes. This is an urgent message that the legislation we pass here in this House must be absolutely clear, yet the government is insisting on trying to weaken our justice system by allowing judges to sentence offenders to house arrest for violent crimes.

Why is the government allowing drug traffickers and those guilty of firearms offences to go virtually unpunished?

• (1145)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to be very clear here. I have repeated this before: Those who commit serious offences would continue to receive serious sentences. Our bill is about getting rid of the failed policies of the Conservative Party, which have filled our prisons with low-risk first-time offenders who needed help, not to be put in jail. These failed policies did not deter crime, did not keep us safe and target the most vulnerable and racialized Canadians.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government can try to deny it all it wants, but organi-

zations like MADD Canada and Women's Shelters know the truth. With Bill C-5, the court may order that the offender serve the sentence as house arrest for offences such as sexual assault and harassment. This means that many women would be stuck in their community with their offender.

The Prime Minister claims he is a feminist, but his legislation would cause harm to women. If he is really a feminist, why would he do that?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is about criminal justice policy that actually keeps our communities safe. I want to invite the member opposite to listen to the very profound testimony of the president of the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers, the Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers, as well as the South Asian Bar Association. They speak to the desperate impact of our current criminal justice system on racialized and indigenous people, and I really reject the premise of the question posed by the member opposite.

* * *

*[Translation]***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, while Quebec is in the midst of debating Bill 96, Ottawa is trying to thwart one of the bill's main measures.

Ottawa's Bill C-13 would prevent Quebec from applying the Charter of the French Language to federally regulated businesses. We need to protect the French language in Quebec, yet Ottawa is protecting the English language at work. On top of that, the Liberals are in a rush. They just moved closure on Bill C-13 to limit debate as much as possible.

Is this because they are afraid Quebecers will rally against this bill, which does not protect the right language in Quebec?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is firmly committed to protecting and promoting the French language across the country, including in Quebec.

We are also committed to supporting official language minority communities. This is why we are moving forward with an ambitious bill that has more teeth. We want to rectify the situation in Canada.

I hope that the Bloc Québécois and all stakeholders will help us pass this bill.

Oral Questions

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, when she talked about the bill having teeth, the minister failed to mention something important. Bill C-13 allows businesses to voluntarily become subject to the Charter of the French Language. She is well aware of the difference between voluntary and mandatory.

If Bill C-13 passes, Bill 96 will apply to businesses only if they so choose. I find it hard to believe this was not prearranged, knowing how plenty of Liberals feel about protecting French. The reality in Quebec is that it is French that must be protected.

Does the minister understand that she is actually protecting the anglicization of workplaces with Bill C-13?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Liberal members' position on French is crystal clear: It must be protected, promoted and valued. It is a beautiful language that all of us will defend.

What concerns me is the radicalization of the Bloc. It claims that Liberal members from Quebec are not Quebeckers, that they are just Canadians. The Bloc members are Quebeckers, but all the others are Canadians.

There are Liberal members from Quebec, who were elected in Quebec by Quebeckers. They too are Quebeckers, and they have just as much right to speak as the Bloc members.

* * *

SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is a groundswell of anger. Thousands of people are frustrated, worried, anxious and sometimes desperate. Why?

The reason is that the federal government is incapable of answering their questions or processing their files. The number of horror stories is growing. Whether it is immigration, passports, visas or employment insurance, the government seems incapable of taking action within a reasonable period of time. This has disastrous consequences for people's lives.

When will the Liberals commit the resources required to quickly respond to Canadians' requests?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

We understand Canadians' frustrations at this time. We have been receiving an unprecedented number of passport applications, and we are responding. We are in a transition period. We are hoping to emerge from the pandemic. We understand that we must put in place the resources required to meet demand, and we will keep these measures in place.

• (1150)

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the delay of the Huawei decision compromised our intelligence sharing with allies and compromised the competitiveness of our domestic telecom industry. Canadians deserve a real answer about why their national security and privacy were put at risk. It took three years to announce a ban, and Huawei is still operating in Canada. The government wasted precious time, and now it asks us to wait even longer for legislation that will finally protect Canadians and close this embarrassing chapter for our country.

Why is the government failing to prioritize the national security and privacy of Canadians?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this gives me the opportunity to come back to the announcement we made yesterday.

This has never been about a race. This is about national security. What we announced yesterday is our intention to exclude equipment and services from Huawei and ZTE from the 5G telecommunication network in Canada. This is in the best interest of Canadians. This is protecting our national security, and it will ensure the resilience of our telecom sector for generations to come.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, across Canada, residents depend on police, fire and EMS services. These services, funded by tax dollars, are facing high gas and diesel prices to fuel their vehicles, which are on the roads in every community 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The cost of fuel is in many cases blowing past emergency service budgets. Taxpayers in these communities cannot afford additional increases in their property taxes to pay for these added costs.

Why will the Liberals not scrap the carbon tax or lower the GST on fuel, not just to help Canadian families that are suffering from high gas prices, but for emergency services as well?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Conservative politicians are making a lot of misleading claims about the price on pollution. Here are the facts: 70% of the gas price increase is due to crude oil prices going up, largely because of Russia's illegal war on Ukraine, and another 25% of the price is the result of provincial taxes and refining margins. That is 95%. As the hon. member will know, eight out of 10 families get more back in the climate incentive than they pay at the pump.

Oral Questions

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, that is more misinformation from the government, which refuses to deal with the issue of gas taxes.

Volunteer fire stations in Nova Scotia are feeling the burn of its bad policies. The Chester Volunteer Fire Department in my riding, thanks to skyrocketing diesel costs, has doubled its fuel budget. Higher gas means reduced spending on training and vital equipment to keep our communities safe. The Liberals are forcing our volunteer fire services to pick between fuelling their trucks and purchasing life-saving equipment.

Will the government cut its excessive gas taxes to help our fire departments survive?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, there is absolutely no guarantee that these companies will pass on any savings to Canadian consumers if we do what the Conservatives propose. Second, on this side of the House, we do believe that climate change is real and we know that we need to act now to ensure that we do not pay huge amounts to meet the climate change catastrophe that is at our doorstep.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, volunteer firefighters across Canada are called away from anniversaries, birthday parties, their jobs, family and Christmas dinners to respond to emergencies and save people's lives. They do this proudly and we thank them for their sacrifice. Unfortunately, retention for these firefighters is very low for municipalities because the cost and burden are so high.

Will the government respond to their emergency and give them gas tax relief for municipal budgets?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am quite surprised that we are receiving any questions related to the economy after a week in which the Conservatives fired their finance critic and seemed to have forgotten to hire a new one. Why did they fire him? It is because he thought it was a bad idea for the Conservatives to impugn the reputation and independence of the Bank of Canada. Perhaps he also thought it was a bad idea to outsource our monetary policy to Bitcoin.

If the Conservatives would like to see real economic policy that will put money back into the pockets of Canadians, they only have to open their copy of the budget.

* * *

• (1155)

SENIORS

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, page six of the Liberal platform promised to develop a safe long-term care act to ensure that seniors are guaranteed the care they deserve no matter where they live.

It has been seven and a half months. Where is it?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it so ironic when Conservatives stand up in the House and pretend to support seniors. Since

2016, they have voted against nearly every single measure that our government has proposed for seniors. To give an example, there was the GIS top-up benefit of \$947 annually for the most vulnerable single seniors, the majority of whom are women, and they voted against it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It is very hard for individuals in the galleries and individuals listening to the TV or radio to hear what is going on when there is so much noise. I would ask members to hold on to their thoughts until it is their turn to ask a question.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Speaker, I have more: enhancing the CPP by 50% for future retirees. The Conservative Party voted against that. Seniors know who has been there for them and it is not the Conservative Party of Canada.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, clearly the member has not read page six of his platform, but I have.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that Canada has failed its seniors, especially those in our long-term care facilities. The conditions that many seniors find themselves in are deplorable.

What steps is the government taking to address the appalling conditions in our long-term care facilities?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to highlight the challenges of long-term care, including gaps in infection prevention and staffing. I personally have seen these challenges. Our government has made significant investments, including \$4 billion to help the provinces and territories improve the standard of care in those facilities and \$41.9 billion in cash support to the provinces and territories through the Canada health transfer.

We will keep working with the provinces and territories so that we can fight COVID-19 together.

HOUSING

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, deficits, monetary expansion and consumer taxes, like the carbon tax, all drive up inflation, and nowhere is this more obvious than in Canada's housing market, where the price of housing went through the roof at a time of massive job loss and shrinking GDP during the pandemic. The government's response has been to pat itself on the back while a generation of Canadians give up on home ownership.

When will the government get serious about reducing inflation, especially in housing?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that we need to increase housing supply in this country to give more Canadians the opportunity of home ownership. We also know that we need to help first-time homebuyers with a tax-free savings account so they can buy their first home. We have banned foreign ownership of Canadian residential real estate to free up more homes for Canadian first-time homebuyers.

We have all these measures, and even more investments in affordable housing, but the Conservatives oppose them. They can stand up here and talk about housing all they want, but when it comes to actually doing something about it, they have no ideas and they vote against ours all the time.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, today is World Bee Day, but there is nothing to celebrate because Quebec's bees are dying. Their mortality rate is 60%. An average mortality rate of 60% is unbelievable.

Bees play an essential role in pollination, and our crops depend on them. On Wednesday, farmers sounded the alarm and called for emergency aid for the sector. No agricultural producer can face a catastrophe of this magnitude on their own.

Will the government provide immediate assistance?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I completely understand my colleague's concern.

I can assure the House that we are working closely with the industry. It is true that this year is a particularly difficult one because of diseases and climate change.

That is why we are working with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and others to find new, safe sources of bees. We will continue to work with them.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, long-term solutions to bee mortality also need to be found.

That is why I presented a notice of motion to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food to try to come up with solutions. That said, there are producers on the brink of despair and companies on the brink of bankruptcy right now. There was a call for an emergency plan yesterday, or rather Wednesday. The pollina-

Oral Questions

tion of blueberry, cranberry and other crops has also been compromised by this tragedy. We need to move quickly.

What will the minister do?

● (1200)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, I want to reassure my colleague.

We understand the importance of the situation. We are working in the short term to ensure that we have enough bees for the season. We are also investing in research and innovation. Together with the industry, we will find short- and long-term solutions.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, the whole world is starting to see the COVID-19 pandemic in the rear-view mirror. Governments around the world are starting to ease up on gathering and travelling restrictions. Canadian travellers are certainly back in full force. Too bad their government is not. Look at the long lineups at airports and passport offices.

When will the government start following the science that the rest of the world is following and allow Canadians to get back to normal?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that Canadians are tired, but ignoring COVID-19 will not make it go away.

We understand how frustrating it is for Canadians to experience long lines and delays at airports. Canadians can rest assured that we are working to resolve this issue as quickly as possible. We have hired approximately 400 new screening officers, who are currently in different phases of their training across the country. We continue to ask that Canadians remain patient as we work hard with CATSA and the air sector to find a solution.

* * *

PASSPORTS

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is too bad that answer is not actually helping Canadians.

Oral Questions

Last week I questioned the minister about Kristen from Hinton, who, after waiting over two months, ended up having to pay express service to get her three sons' passports. The minister replied that if a person submits all required passport documents and Service Canada is outside of service standards, the client should not be paying extra fees.

Will the minister confirm that Kristen and others who paid extra fees will receive a refund and no Canadian will pay extra fees due to the minister's incompetence?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I said last week, that is correct. No Canadian should be paying extra fees if they have submitted all the correct documents and everything is in order with their application, and if their application is not processed within the processing times. If that is in fact the case, there is a refund process.

I would be happy to follow up with the member opposite to share with him how he can share that with his constituents, but it is also available on the Government of Canada's website.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the world is getting back to normal, the Liberals are bent on keeping Canadians from returning to work. Their punitive mandates and virtue signalling are in fact imposing poverty upon some citizens. This includes at least four women in east central Alberta who work for FCC and Canada Post.

When will the Liberals allow these women, and all the Canadians they fired, to get back to work like before the pandemic?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, from the beginning of the pandemic, we made a commitment to Canadians to keep them healthy and safe during the pandemic. We have put in place measures to protect workers and communities, and federal public servants stepped up. They got fully vaccinated, up to 99%. This shows that we know we need to continue to make sure that public servants and Canadians are safe.

We are committed to reviewing the current policy and will come back with a decision.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, every day in this place we see the Liberals play COVID theatre with their masks, only to remove them as soon as they leave the parliamentary precinct, at bars, restaurants and receptions. This is as they insist on continuing never-ending mandates and restrictions.

When will the Liberals stop their hypocritical theatre and end the mandates?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is very troubling to see members on the opposite side deny the existence of a pandemic that is still stealing the lives of so many of our neighbours. Just in the last three weeks, over 1,000 Canadians have died from COVID-19. Masks help and vaccinations help.

Time and time again, we are hearing from the Conservatives that they want to get back to normal. I want this pandemic to be over too. Every Canadian wants this pandemic to be over. However, just wishing it so does not make that happen. We must continue to be vigilant, wear our masks and encourage vaccination.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1205)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, it is getting exceptionally loud in here, and I am having a hard time hearing the answers. If the official opposition and the government are going back and forth, I am sure they are not hearing the answers as well. I would ask members to please tone it down.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, people across the country are dying from the toxic drug supply. Instead of receiving help, they are being punished.

A recent media report found that Black and indigenous people continue to be disproportionately arrested on drug possession charges. This echoes what Health Canada's expert task force on substance use told the government over a year ago. Decriminalization will help Canadians get the help they need.

The war on drugs does not reduce harm or help people. Will the government finally address the root causes of substance use by treating it truly as a health issue rather than a criminal issue?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government recognizes that problematic substance use is a health issue, and we are working to divert people who use drugs away from the criminal justice system and toward supportive and trusted relationships in health and social services. With the budget 2022 investment of an additional \$100 million, we have now committed over \$800 million to support community-led harm reduction treatment and prevention projects since 2015.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, last week, all members in the House agreed to put in place, without delay, a Canada disability benefit. I thank the members for restoring hope to Canadians with disabilities, but hope is not enough. We must deliver action. It has been a year since the Liberals tabled a Canada disability benefit and let it fall. We cannot fail the disability community again.

Oral Questions

Will the government respect the will of this House and table the Canada disability benefit immediately?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since 2015, we have taken historic steps towards building a barrier-free Canada. In addition to the \$112 million from budget 2021, with budget 2022 we are investing nearly \$300 million in disability inclusion, including an employment strategy for persons with disabilities.

Moving forward, we are absolutely committed to implementing the disability inclusion action plan, which will establish a robust employment strategy and enhance eligibility for government disability programs and benefits. That includes introducing the Canada disability benefit act to address poverty among Canadians with disabilities. We all benefit when—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Sudbury has the floor.

* * *

[Translation]

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we all know, our tourism sector was hit hard these past two years by the pandemic because of health measures and border closures.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance tell us how the government is supporting this sector, which is a key economic driver and job creator, especially for young Canadians and rural communities?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sudbury for the question and her hard work.

I am delighted to announce that we just launched consultations on our renewed federal tourism growth strategy. We will work with the provincial, territorial and municipal governments, as well as with our partners in indigenous communities, in order to continue promoting our tourism sector and ensuring economic growth.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, on April 9, the Prime Minister announced that Ukrainians who come to Canada would be given temporary housing assistance and short-term income supports.

Last week, Alexey, a Ukrainian, landed in Toronto and was greeted by the Red Cross. Unfortunately, there was no short-term housing or income support because the program actually had not even launched yet. The announcement was made on April 9. Today is May 20.

Will the government keep its word and provide Ukrainians with the announced supports, or is this just another broken Liberal promise?

• (1210)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his great advocacy. We both sit on the immigration committee and I know how passionate and involved he is.

We have welcomed over 32,000 Ukrainians to Canada, and certainly our commitment continues to be to helping Ukrainians as they come to Canada. We will continue to support them. Just last week, we announced we would be welcoming a charter flight next week in Winnipeg.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, it looks like another broken promise.

Anna recently gave birth to her third daughter, Sophie, in a bomb shelter in Ukraine. Anna and her daughters had to leave her husband and their father behind and escape to safety. They were forced to wait in Turkey because of impossible demands by IRCC, including demanding a birth certificate for Sophie, who was born in a bomb shelter. This is just ridiculous.

Will the Liberals finally accept that their policies are not working at all and implement visa-free travel for Ukrainians?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on individual cases, I would certainly appreciate having this conversation with him. As the member well knows, there are numerous measures we have put in place to ensure that individuals can come to Canada. As I mention all the time, we will continue to be there to welcome as many Ukrainians as possible in Canada.

* * *

PASSPORTS

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, Immigration Canada's annual "Fees Report" notes that just 19% of passports were processed within the required timelines, and this audit was well before the current surge and delays. At the same time, 88% of executives at Immigration Canada received hefty performance bonuses.

Does the minister believe failing Canadians applying for passports 81% of the time warrants performance bonuses?

Oral Questions

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I said, we recognize that Canadians are experiencing frustration right now with the incredible surge in demand when it comes to passports. We are experiencing unprecedented demand, the likes of which we have not seen since 2006, because over the past two years Canadians followed public health advice. They stayed home and did their part to keep themselves and their loved ones safe.

We are working around the clock at Service Canada, including on evenings and weekends. We have added over 600 additional staff at this point to ensure that we can meet those processing times in a timely manner.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government was failing 81% of the time before the current surge.

The Service Fees Act requires government to develop service standards for government services that charge fees, such as for passports. It also requires the government to refund such fees if such standards are not met, under the directive on charging and special financial authorities.

The government has not been meeting its standard for passport application services, as we know, for well over 80% of people. Therefore, is the government refunding these Canadians, as is required under law?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for in-person passport services, we are meeting standards about 98% of the time. These are within 10 days. It is the mail-in option that is experiencing delays. We continue to work around the clock.

Previous to the pandemic, the majority of passports were processed in person as opposed to the mail-in option. This has now shifted, so we are adjusting and shifting resources as necessary, but we will continue to examine and do everything we can to make sure that we are delivering these services in a timely manner for Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, the luxury tax in the budget bill is flawed.

Rather than taxing billionaires who buy private jets, the government is taxing our aerospace industry and putting it at a disadvantage in relation to its foreign competitors. Everyone agrees on that.

The government is working hard to get us to pass Bill C-19 as quickly as possible, but there is nothing to indicate that the government is working just as hard to remedy the problems with its luxury tax.

Will the government commit to making changes to Bill C-19 to prevent it from undermining Quebec and its leading industry?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We know that the aerospace industry is vitally important to Quebec and to all of Canada as a result. That is why companies that sell aircraft for export are entitled to a tax rebate for this. We are working closely with the aerospace industry to ensure that this important measure, one that seeks to ensure that everyone pays their fair share, will not negatively affect our manufacturers.

• (1215)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, that is not at all true. This has been going on for months. There is no communication, and it takes six months to get the rebate. Companies will be advancing the government hundreds of millions of dollars.

Management and unions are not often aligned, but they were yesterday at the Standing Committee on Finance. The aerospace industry and aerospace workers were united in saying that just a few little changes to this luxury tax would make it okay. Without these changes, however, it will miss the mark and hurt our businesses.

The government may well have bought itself a majority through its agreement with the NDP, but it is alone on this issue. The entire sector is opposed.

Will the government amend Bill C-19?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague once again. I know that he works hard on this issue at the Standing Committee on Finance.

I assure my hon. colleague that we are working very closely with the aerospace industry. Our measures are designed to ensure that everyone pays their fair share and that the wealthiest in Canada, the 1%, pay taxes on luxury jets, cars and yachts. These measures are important to our government.

I will work with my colleague to ensure that this does not hurt our manufacturers.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, the carbon capture tax credit included in this year's budget was not included in the budget implementation act. Why not?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that carbon capture and storage is going to be critical to reach our 2030 as well as our 2050 goals. We need to use every tool in the tool box, as the Minister of Environment and Minister of Natural Resources have said. Again, this incentive is a critical tool to reduce our emissions, and this is an important technology to share with the world.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, there are lots of tools in that box.

Carbon capture is widely viewed by all scientific input as the nearest-term solution to decarbonizing our energy needs. There is no path to environmental goals without it.

It has been over a year since the government rejected my tax credit on carbon capture because it needed to consult. After all that time, it was announced in this year's budget, yet there is still no action.

If the minister believes the climate crisis is the biggest challenge the world faces, why is he so slow in advancing the most obvious solution?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I hope the hon. member has had a very deep dive into our emissions reduction plan, which is a very ambitious sector-by-sector pathway to reach our 2030 emissions. Carbon capture, utilization and storage is going to play a very important role in that.

Not only that, in the ERP we have incentives for infrastructure, support for electric vehicles, and energy retrofits for greener homes and buildings. We are also going to reduce oil and gas emissions. We are going to work with the sector—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, a constituent named Sharon called me the other day to say that she cannot afford to drive to the city for groceries because gas prices are crazy. Many agree with Sharon, especially rural and low-income Canadians.

Last week, the average gas price was 85¢ less per litre in the United States compared with Canada. Why? Because the Liberals love taxing fuel.

Why has the government not provided any tax relief for Canadians at the pumps?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that a price on pollution is the best way to fight climate change, and that inflation is a global phenomenon.

We also know that the federal price on pollution is 11¢ per litre, and that it is the only fee collected on gas that is refunded to consumers, with eight of 10 families actually getting more money back.

Why is it the Conservatives oppose all of our affordability measures, such as child care, retirement security and the national housing strategy, but are always willing to make life more affordable for very profitable oil and gas companies?

Oral Questions

• (1220)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, friendship centres provide important culturally informed employment, youth and housing programs for indigenous people across the country. Friendship centres are important for indigenous and non-indigenous people to come together and learn from one another.

The Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre has been providing essential programs and services to indigenous people from across Nova Scotia from its downtown location in Halifax since 1972. Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services inform the House on what this government is doing to support the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre?

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the member for Kings—Hants for this very important question and his hard work on this file.

The Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre currently provides over 55 programs, including early childhood education, employment, and housing supports for culture and language, as well as harm reduction.

Yesterday, we announced \$4.91 million in joint federal funding to contribute to the design and construction of a new facility. The funding will also support social and economic opportunities for indigenous entrepreneurs.

Building an improved, safe and accessible space that supports the delivery of high-quality culturally relevant—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

* * *

PASSPORTS

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, Kristie from my riding submitted her passport renewal by mail, which was the only option in March. Still, three months later, she has not received her passport. When she heard from Passport Canada, she was given a phone number that spit out an automated message and then disconnected. When she wanted to file a complaint, guess what number Service Canada gave her? It was the same one.

How embarrassing. When will the backlog be cleared?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is a huge demand for passports at this point in time. I understand the situation that Kristie is in. I would invite the member opposite, and any members opposite if they also have urgent cases, to please get in touch with my office. We are happy to help them ensure that Canadians get their passports on time.

Oral Questions

As I have explained recently, prepandemic the majority of passport delivery issuance was happening in Service Canada offices. That has switched to mail-ins. We are addressing this issue and allocating resources as necessary.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, two days ago the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety stated, in reference to the prison farm in Joyceville, “To my knowledge, there is no slaughterhouse.” This would appear to contradict the response given on April 8 to another MP by her minister, who stated that the existing slaughterhouse would remain in operation.

We are all a bit confused. Has the parliamentary secretary just announced that the slaughterhouse has been shut down and will not be reopened?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I applaud the hon. member for his new-found interest in corrections, and I have to ask where he was when the Conservative government was making mean-spirited cuts to corrections, including prison farms. We know that the rehabilitation of those who commit crimes is important for public safety, and that is why we reopened the prison farms. It is good for public safety, it is good for inmates and it is good for the community.

I would ask him to ask the Save Our Prison Farms folks what they think about the prison farms in their communities.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There seem to be a lot of conversations going back and forth, including from parliamentary secretaries, so I would ask members to ensure that they hold on to their thoughts while other people are trying to answer questions.

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

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, when the Canadian wine industry was targeted by Australia at the World Trade Organization, the Liberal government said that it had the industry's back. Canada's 1,100-plus wineries and cideries need the level of government support that the European, Australian and American wine and cider industries receive, not a big Liberal tax grab in the form of an excise duty.

Will the finance minister keep her promise to support the long-term interests of wineries and cideries, especially the smaller businesses like the cideries in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, or will she just continue to tax them into bankruptcy?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with respect to the wine industry, we stand firmly in favour of supporting this industry in terms of its growth in this country and in terms of its growth, economic development and ability to export.

The minister's work is taking her into different areas of the world. Right now, she is travelling to APEC to address the need for diversification in the Asia-Pacific. With our agreements and trade accords, what we are doing is ensuring the exportation of Canadian wine and other Canadian industries so they can meet the important targets we are setting.

* * *

• (1225)

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a free and independent press is vital to democracy, and it is sustained by journalists' remarkable work. From everyday sacrifices to numerous risks, journalists face incredible hardships to inform the world. However, Putin's regime has decided to further damage these strong values by closing the CBC bureau in Moscow to silence journalists from reporting the facts.

What is the government's position on this deeply troubling authoritarian decision?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we strongly condemn this decision by Putin. This is a desperate attempt to cover up the truth and hide his regime's crimes in Ukraine.

A free and independent press is essential for reporting the facts. It is at the core of our democracy, and we should never take it for granted. Around the world, and even here, journalists are being threatened and intimidated. I sincerely thank Canadian journalists and all journalists for their remarkable work and the risks they take every day.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, the situation at Canada's major airports is a mess. There are massive lineups, missed flights and stress and anxiety for so many travellers. All of this is because the government loosened pandemic travel restrictions but did not do the work necessary to prepare our airports. What is worse is that the brunt of this crisis is falling on airport workers, who are working massive overtime, missing breaks and more.

How is it that the Minister of Transport has been so woefully unprepared for the return of travel?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I have said several times throughout the last couple of days, we understand how frustrating it is for Canadians to experience long lines and delays at airports. This is clearly not a staffing issue alone. CATSA is at 90% of prepandemic staffing levels, while travel is at 70% of what it was in 2019.

Our government is working really hard with the aviation sector and all the agencies involved to make sure we have a plan in place that will reduce these frustrations. This is a multi-faceted issue and we are working with everybody. We kindly ask all Canadians to remain patient.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, with the House's permission, I would like to table the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada "Fees Report" audit, which shows that just 19% of passports are being done in the standard time, not the 98% the minister claimed today.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 12 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

While I am on my feet, I move:

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

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

[Translation]

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

[English]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, I move that it be agreed to on division.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

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

• (1310)

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

Routine Proceedings

(Division No. 103)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Ali
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Barron
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fry	Gaheer
Garneau	Garrison
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Khera
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lalonde
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	McPherson
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Miller
Morrice	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers

Government Orders

Romanado
Saks
Sarai
Schiefke
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Spengemann
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo— 169

Sahota
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid

Small
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Thériault
Tochor
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Vignola
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Therrien
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Villemure
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams— 128

PAIRED

Nil

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ONLINE NEWS ACT

BILL C-18—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

Furthermore, I am tabling government responses to Questions Nos. 461 to 464.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, for the record, in response to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, as the shadow minister responsible for Bill C-18, I was not consulted on time allocation for this bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is debate and not a point of order.

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

The hon. member for Calgary Centre has a point of order.

● (1315)

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, educate me here. If what the minister stated was in fact untrue in putting a motion forward, should it not be corrected?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, this is a point of debate and not a point of order.

NAYS

Members

Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Beaulieu
Benzen	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desilets	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fortin	Gallant
Garon	Gaudreau
Généreux	Gill
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	MacKenzie
Maguire	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Michaud
Moore	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Plamondon	Poilievre
Rayes	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Savard-Tremblay
Seeback	Shields
Shipley	Simard

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

ACT FOR THE SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY OF CANADA'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to speak to Bill C-13, which is particularly important to the Bloc Québécois.

Today's strategy from the Liberals, supported by the NDP, was to move time allocation on a bill that is vital to protecting French in Quebec as well as in the rest of Canada.

Bill C-13, which is currently under consideration, represents the culmination of efforts to modernize the Official Languages Act. This objective is set out in the mandate letter of the current Minister of Official Languages, as well as that of her predecessor.

In the September 2020 Speech from the Throne, the government recognized the special status of French and its responsibility to protect and promote it, both outside and within Quebec.

The stage seemed to be set for the federal government to protect French in Quebec. It appeared the government would include the reform, requests and demands of those dealing with the decline of their language on a daily basis, namely Quebeckers.

However, in both Bill C-32 from the previous Parliament and the current version, the Official Languages Act reform completely ignores the demands made unanimously by the Quebec National Assembly and the Bloc Québécois about protecting French in Quebec.

In fact, the federal government's bill flies in the face of the Quebec National Assembly's Bill 96. One of the objectives of Bill 96 is to extend the application of the Charter of the French Language throughout Quebec. Despite that, in their interventions and communications, the Liberals claim to support Bill 101 and brag about being champions of the French language.

Since the Prime Minister and Liberal members claim that they have always supported the Charter of the French Language, how can they introduce a bill that will prevent the Quebec government from applying that charter within its own territory? Based on a 2007 Supreme Court ruling, provincial laws can apply to federally regulated businesses as long as they do not directly violate any applicable federal law.

Quebec has long been asking Ottawa to allow Bill 101 to apply to federally regulated businesses based on that ruling. A resolution supported by all parties in the Quebec National Assembly and adopted on December 1, 2020, stated that the Charter of the French Language “must be applied to companies operating under federal jurisdiction within Québec” and called on the Government of Canada to “make a formal commitment to work with Québec to ensure the implementation of this change”.

The message could not be any clearer, but what did the Liberals do at the first opportunity? They imposed on Quebec a language regime that subjects all federally regulated businesses to the Official Languages Act, while at the same time destroying Quebec's ability to apply its Charter of the French Language to businesses operating on its territory.

That should not be taken lightly. There is even a serious and real danger for French in Quebec with Bill C-13. In the event of a difference between the federal regime, which is based on bilingualism, and Quebec's regime, which is based on the primacy of French, the federal regime would prevail.

The Minister of Official Languages can repeat as much as she wants that Bill C-13 will protect French in Quebec as well as Bill 101, but that is not true. It is factually incorrect.

Bill C-13 seeks to apply the bilingualism regime to Air Canada. Francophones will be given the right to complain in the event that the right to work in French is breached. It has been shown many times that this model cannot protect the rights of francophones to work and be served in their language. Despite the thousands of complaints against Air Canada over the years, we see that for these non-compliant organizations, French is nothing but an irritant. How will extending this model to all federally regulated private business stop the decline of French?

• (1320)

What is more, Bill C-13 confirms the right to work in English at federally regulated businesses in Quebec. I repeat, the Official Languages Act is reinforcing bilingualism, not protecting French. Some will say that the bilingualism approach seems reasonable at first glance. It leaves it up to the individual to interact in the language of their choice. However, when we take into account the linguistic and demographic dynamics in which that choice is made, this approach has devastating and irreversible consequences on French. Do not take it from me. It is science.

Professor Guillaume Rousseau from Université de Sherbrooke explained this phenomenon to the Standing Committee on Official Languages in February:

...virtually all language policy experts around the world believe that only [an approach that focuses on just one official language] can guarantee the survival and development of a minority language....

The...approach may seem generous, since individuals may choose which language to use among many, but it is in fact the strongest language that will dominate....In real terms, the federal government should do less for English and more for French in Quebec.

As my party's science and innovation critic, I must insist on the importance of basing our decisions on scientific data. Ottawa must listen to reason, listen to the science and respect the evidence. Science cannot be invoked only when it suits our purposes and ignored when it does not, and the Prime Minister needs to take that into account.

Government Orders

When we look around the House of Commons, we quickly see that the Liberal Party stands completely alone when it comes to the application of Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses. It has always been easy for the Prime Minister to say that he is in favour of Bill 101 as long as that did not require him to take any action, politically speaking. Today, it is clear that French is declining in Quebec and Canada and that its decline is accelerating so fast that the Prime Minister himself has been forced to recognize it and express concern. He still says that he is in favour of Bill 101, but he is not walking the talk.

We are witnessing yet another attempt by the Liberal government to create a wide, untenable gap. On the one hand, the government wants to be the champion of French because it feels the public pressure to protect French better, including in Quebec. On the other hand, it completely refuses to let Quebec control its own language policy. The result is that the Liberal Party now stands alone in its stubbornness. We saw that when my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît introduced Bill C-238, which seeks to subject all federally regulated businesses to the Charter of the French Language. The Bloc, the Conservative Party and the NDP supported it, but the Liberal Party did not.

Let me make this clear. The Bloc Québécois will not support Bill C-13 unless and until amendments are made that enable Quebec to be the master of its own language policy. The federal government must acknowledge that the Quebec nation is grappling with anglicization, and it must introduce a differentiated approach that recognizes and respects Quebec's unique linguistic reality. That is why explicit recognition that the Charter of the French Language takes precedence over the Official Languages Act for federally regulated businesses in Quebec is a minimum requirement. That is what the Bloc Québécois and the National Assembly of Quebec want, so that is what Quebec needs.

• (1325)

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for his intervention. I think he and I share the same concern for the French fact. His concern is focused more on French in Quebec, while the French fact as a whole, in Quebec and across Canada, is what matters to me.

My colleague said that he is not in favour of Bill C-13. He gave an ultimatum. I am privileged to be a member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages together with his colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île.

If amendments were put forward by the Bloc Québécois, the Conservative Party, the NDP and probably the Liberal Party of Canada too, would my colleague be prepared to work with us to advance the cause, promote French and protect it from declining?

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Speaker, we must never say never. I would like to congratulate my colleague on his work at the Standing Committee on Official Languages, and I thank him for what he does.

Right now, the bill does not suit Quebec or the Bloc Québécois. Is it possible to make it better? Are there positive things in it? In both cases, the answer is yes.

However, this bill, as it stands now, does not protect the French language in Quebec because it enables federally regulated private businesses to choose between English and French. This does not protect the French language.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, the NDP agrees that it would have been much simpler to impose Bill 101, the Charter of the French Language, on all federally regulated private businesses. However, I disagree with my colleague on the choice that businesses will have to make. I found his comments a bit harsh. Forty per cent of federally regulated business have already voluntarily adopted the Charter of the French Language, and others may as well.

The other option is not official bilingualism. Bill C-13 would create the new use of French in federally regulated private businesses act. A well-known Quebec law firm has said that, based on its interpretation of the bill, employees of a federally regulated private business in Quebec will have the right to carry out their work and be supervised in French, to receive any communications and documentation from their employer in French and to use widely used work instruments and computer systems in French. I do not see what the problem is.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Speaker, if it is so obvious, I invite my colleague to support our bill.

I clearly explained in my speech that the Official Languages Act will take precedence over the Charter of the French Language. The language of business for us in Quebec is French; the common language is French; and the only official language is French.

We do not want the application of another law, the Official Languages Act, to supersede the language laws that already exist in Quebec. It is that simple.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, it is not the Official Languages Act that will apply to federally regulated businesses in Quebec, but the use of French in federally regulated private businesses act. These are two completely different laws.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Speaker, we do not need the federal government to protect French in Quebec.

Quebec is charge of its own language policy. It is that simple. The federal government says that its bill contains positive elements for minority francophones outside Quebec. However, both the Government of Quebec and the National Assembly of Quebec agree that federally regulated private businesses should be subject to Bill 101.

Quebec does not want the federal government to once again interfere in an area where Quebec has already taken charge.

• (1330)

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to my Bloc colleague's speech.

However, it seems as though some people are having conversations in the House right now. Could you please intervene, Madam Speaker?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I urge those who wish to have discussions to do so in the lobbies and then return to listen to the fine speech by the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, thank you for your kind description of my speech.

Today is the second time I rise in the House to speak to the bill to modernize official languages. What parliamentarians are trying to do here today is establish rules to stop the decline of French, protect it and promote it. I am obviously talking about the modernization of the Official Languages Act.

Of the two official languages, French is definitely the more vulnerable. It is clear that we will be speaking more French. However, I think we need to take pride in living in a country that is unique in its bilingualism, French and English, and we need to safeguard this unique character. Our country must still have two official languages in 50 years.

I am concerned about what this government wants to do. In recent weeks, very specific actions have shown us that this government is insensitive, it is not paying attention, and it has no intention of really protecting French, promoting it and stopping its decline. I have many examples to talk about. The list is very long, but I will try to restrain myself.

The Liberal government appointed a unilingual lieutenant governor in 2019, since that falls under its purview. She actually is bilingual, but her other language is not the second official language of our country. That is the first inconsistency I wanted to point out. It is rather odd.

A provincial court judge in New Brunswick recently ruled that it was unconstitutional to appoint a unilingual anglophone lieutenant governor. We were pleased with that ruling. We realize that we are in a bilingual country. New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province in Canada. However, the government appointed a unilingual lieutenant governor, so obviously that was wrong.

We learned this week that the federal government is going to appeal that ruling because it argues that it makes no sense and does not hold up under the pretext that it is not a provincial matter. The only body that can enforce bilingualism in our country at this time is the federal government, and it is fighting a decision that would help it enforce bilingualism. Three Liberal members from the Atlantic provinces have even publicly challenged their own government's decision. It is rather odd. Even within the party in power, people are worried.

To add insult to injury, once again the government is challenging a ruling on the protection of French. That is rather odd. I should also point out that, just recently, the government made a veiled attempt to challenge the Federal Court of Appeal ruling of January 2022 to allow francophones in British Columbia to have access to services in French. It is rather peculiar that the Attorney General of Canada wants to appeal this Supreme Court of Canada ruling.

Government Orders

There are also the press conferences that are held in English only by certain Canadian government ministers. I would remind members that this is a bilingual country that speaks French and English. When the Minister of Environment and Climate Change's briefing was released, Hélène Buzzetti tweeted that the information was issued in English only. However, we are probably the ones who are worried for no reason. Everything is just fine.

I am sure that deep down, the Minister of Official Languages, a woman I respect, is trying to protect bilingualism in Canada, but she has to fight for it within her own party. She is a representative from New Brunswick.

This week, after refusing several times to answer journalists' questions, she was forced to say that she supported her government's decision to challenge the ruling on the matter of the Lieutenant Governor.

• (1335)

Here in the House, members are asking numerous questions about bilingualism and the French language. We see who will answer the questions. The Minister of Official Languages is always ready to answer, but she is being cut off and the floor is being given to someone else. That is rather strange.

I read and reread Bill C-13, and it includes some good measures. As my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques was saying earlier, it contains some positive elements. However, it is not much when we think about what needs to be done to stop the decline of French and protect and promote the language of Molière. We need to work.

In my first speech the other day, I said that I was reaching out to the government to help it so that we can have real legislation with real teeth. As I have said before, Bill C-13 is pretty wimpy. Canada's French colony needs legislation that packs a real punch, legislation with real teeth, so that we have the measures and regulations we need to protect the French fact in Canada.

I repeat that I have the privilege of serving on the Standing Committee on Official Languages. The last time the Official Languages Act was modernized was in 1988 when the Conservative Party of Canada was in office. We are prepared to work with the government. We intend to protect the French fact and to suggest good amendments to the bill. I invite all parties to participate in the committee study of Bill C-13.

On this Friday, I state loud and clear that the Conservative Party of Canada is prepared to reach out to the Liberal government so that we can get the job done right and protect the French fact in North America.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier for his fine speech.

Government Orders

I would like to hear his comments and analysis about the fact that the government chose to appoint a unilingual anglophone lieutenant governor in our country's only bilingual province. New Brunswick subsequently took this matter to court, and the Liberals are going to fight it before a judge. The government says that future lieutenant governors will always be bilingual, and yet it has just appointed an anglophone to the position.

When it comes to respect, what message is being sent to the people who speak French in New Brunswick or elsewhere in Canada?

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Joliette. I have enjoyed working with him since 2015.

My colleague pointed to a glaring issue. How can we trust such an inconsistent government? In my speech, I presented what I feel are some very concrete facts to demonstrate this government's inconsistency. It makes us doubt, as Canadians, that the government will actually appoint a bilingual lieutenant governor in New Brunswick in the future.

We have the opportunity to enshrine this in law. Not everyone on the other side of the House is acting in bad faith, but I would prefer that this be written into law so that there is no potential for misinterpretation or loopholes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulé (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. The Liberal government is preaching, not practising. Worse still, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who is a francophone and a Quebecker, does all his communication in English. They have sunk pretty low.

I also agree with my colleague that Bill C-13 is a step in the right direction and that it could go much further. I would like to know what improvements he would like to see to Bill C-13 for francophones.

• (1340)

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I had the privilege of meeting with many organizations from Quebec and elsewhere in Canada who made their case. The list of things we will protect via amendment is long.

First up is the central agency. Canada's governmental structure and governance include three organizations that can give instructions in various departments: the Department of Finance, the Privy Council and Treasury Board. All the organizations want a central agency at Treasury Board to have the authority to make sure changes trickle down to all departments. That would be our first amendment.

Here is a second amendment. In Canada, the only entity that can enforce both official languages is the federal government. When it signs agreements with provinces and territories, it must include linguistic clauses with certain conditions while respecting jurisdiction so as to protect the French fact across the country.

[*English*]

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I believe it is so important that we protect and promote francophone language and culture in our country. I am proud to represent

a very large Franco-Albertan riding with towns like Morinville, Legal and Rivière Qui Barre.

We had a tragedy happen last summer, where the iconic St. Jean Baptiste Church burned to the ground. It was about a year ago. This was really an icon for the Franco-Albertan community. I just want to hear the member's comments on how the government needs to do better to defend not only the French language, but also francophone culture across our country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, yes, the francophone community is strong. We are fortunate that this is part of Canada's history, because it means that French is still spoken here in our country and we have a bilingual country. Yes, we must invest in and support our linguistic communities, especially in minority settings.

I strongly suggest that as part of our committee study, we ensure that communities all across the country have the appropriate tools.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

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

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

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded division, please.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, May 30, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

There being a message from Her Excellency the Governor General, I would ask members to rise.

* * *

• (1345)

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A), 2022-23

A message from Her Excellency the Governor General transmitting supplementary estimates (A) for the financial year ending March 31, 2023, was presented by the President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House.

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the supplementary estimates (A), 2022-23.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have a point of order from the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties—

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Do you know what it is?

Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following: That in relation to its study of the situation at the Russia/Ukraine border and implications for peace and security, seven members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development be authorized to travel to Riga, Latvia; Tallinn, Estonia; Vilnius, Lithuania and Warsaw, Poland in the summer of 2022 and that the necessary staff accompany the committee.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is very obvious we do not have unanimous consent.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I have another one.

There have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following: That in relation to the—

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There does not seem to be unanimous consent.

There are no back-and-forth discussions needed at this point.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has another point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I will try this one. I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at two o'clock so we can start Private Members' Business.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being two o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

HEALTH-BASED APPROACH TO SUBSTANCE USE ACT

The House resumed from March 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-216, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to enact the Expungement of Certain Drug-related Convictions Act and the National Strategy on Substance Use Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to join the debate on

Private Members' Business

Bill C-216, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to enact the expungement of certain drug-related convictions act and the national strategy on substance use act.

The sponsor of this private member's bill is a fellow British Columbian, the member for Courtenay—Alberni, and I want to thank him for introducing this legislation. It is very timely because Canada has been struggling with an opioid overdose crisis. It is Canada's other pandemic.

However, there are some stark distinctions. The COVID-19 pandemic will wane. It is waning, and we are seeing it in the rear-view mirror. We have also developed a vaccine to combat COVID-19, and we are developing a community immunity, or a herd immunity, as some people call it. Harm reduction measures for COVID-19 are known, which are simple and generally effective. None of that is true for the opioid crisis.

I would like to read something from the government's own website. It states, "The opioid overdose crisis is worsening during the COVID-19 pandemic with many communities across Canada reporting record numbers of opioid-related deaths, emergency calls and hospitalizations." The website also points out that there has been a 95% increase, which is almost double, of opioid-related deaths in the first year of the pandemic, moving up to 7,200.

This is a very large number. It is shocking. These are real people and fellow Canadian citizens. These are moms and dads, brothers and sisters. They are people who are loved by friends and family. These are people who have an opioid addiction or substance addiction and have found themselves unfortunately coming into contact with likely fentanyl-laced opioids.

I grieve for a family friend in my riding who, just a little while ago, marked the anniversary of the death of their son to an opioid overdose death. He was loved by his family. He had a lot of friends. He was a popular man. He had a great job. His employer relied on him, and his fellow workers enjoyed working with him. He died at home alone of an alleged opioid overdose. He sadly became part of Canada's statistics.

The sponsor of the private member's bill, as I pointed out, is a fellow British Columbian, so I want to look at some British Columbia statistics when it comes to illicit drug toxicity deaths. The number of these deaths in B.C. equates to about five deaths per day. Every day, five people in British Columbia die of an illicit drug toxicity poisoning. In 2022, 74% of those dying were age 30 to 59, and 77% were male. More than half those deaths occurred at home when the person was alone.

Private Members' Business

There was a big increase in illicit toxicity deaths since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, although we were seeing a large increase in 2015 when illicit drug toxicity deaths became the number one cause of unnatural deaths in British Columbia. That is going back to 2015. There was already a big uptick. At that time, fentanyl use spiked to become the number one cause of illicit drug toxicity deaths.

We agree that this bill is very timely, and it is a very important discussion. Let us have a closer look at the draft legislation. It will amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to repeal provisions that make it an offence to possess certain substances. It will also enact a new act for the expungement of certain drug-related convictions, as though the conviction never happened. It will also enact the national strategy on substance use act, which would require the Minister of Health to develop a harm reduction strategy.

I want to focus on that last part, the national strategy on substance use. The focus of that, according to the draft legislation, is harm caused by criminalization of substance abuse and not on the substance abuse itself. It would also introduce a low-barrier access to safe supply of addictive and harmful substances, focus on supervised consumption sites and overdose prevention, and focus on reducing stigma associated with substance abuse.

• (1350)

I believe the intent or hope of this legislation is that it would lead to fewer victims of substance abuse. That is a laudable goal, but I am not sure that these are the correct tools. It is my and the Conservative Party's position that we should always focus on recovery and treatment.

If we go back to the proposed national strategy on substance use, it is commendable for promoting universal access to recovery. I would support that. It would focus on relapse prevention programs, which is very supportable, and it would focus on evidence-based prevention programs. Of course, these are all important things, and I would support those initiatives.

In the 2021 federal election, the Conservatives presented a plan that included creating 1,000 drug treatment beds, creating 50 recovery community centres, supporting local and culturally appropriate addiction treatment and partnering with provinces for access to Naloxone. As such, we find some common ground.

However, we think that people should be given the hope of recovery, not just reduced harm, not just safe supply, not just safe injection sites, but real, long-lasting solutions full of hope for a better life. We believe Canada ought to focus on recovery and treatment as our basic framework for dealing with the opioid crisis.

As for the decriminalization of possession, which is part of this private member's bill, I would note that in 2020 the Public Prosecution Service of Canada issued a directive to avoid prosecuting cases of simple possession. That reflects and mirrors what is happening in some European countries, where possession still remains criminal, but police and prosecutors are given instructions not to intervene based on discretionary use of their powers and guidelines. This, I think, gives the criminal justice system the flexibility to treat addiction as a health issue, when and where appropriate, in cases

where that is appropriate, but it also retains tools for law enforcement to keep harmful drugs off our streets.

I am on the public safety and national security committee, and we have just come off a study on gun control and illegal arms trafficking, focusing on the increase of gun crimes committed by members of street gangs. In that study, we heard evidence from a number of witnesses that showed us an inextricable link between drug trafficking and arms trafficking. The two go hand in hand.

I have a couple of quotes here from witnesses. The first is from Mitch Bourbonniere, who works in Winnipeg. He said, "Anyone in Winnipeg can purchase a firearm illegally, much the same way as you [can purchase] illegal drugs."

Here is another quote, from Michael Rowe of the Vancouver police force. In an answer to a question correlating arms smuggling and drug smuggling, he said, "certainly...there's a correlation there that I don't think can be disputed, especially as the manufacturing or sale of fentanyl produces an extremely lucrative drug market. That lucrative drug market typically invites conflict that will then result in gang violence." There is no doubt that there is a link between drug trafficking and arms trafficking.

I do not believe that removing the personal use of these drugs from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act would solve that problem. Our focus should remain on tackling the source of lethal fentanyl-laced opioids and on those criminals who produce the fentanyl and earn big profits.

• (1355)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, today I am speaking to Bill C-216. To summarize it in its broadest terms, this bill deals primarily with the decriminalization of simple possession of drugs and is based on three components.

First, the bill sets out the legislative amendments that are relevant to achieving its objective of decriminalization. These include amendments to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code, and the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act. In essence, the intent is to repeal subsection 4(1) of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, as well as those parts of that act, the Criminal Code and the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act that refer to this particular subsection. Subsection 4(1) of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act states, "Except as authorized under the regulations, no person shall possess a substance included in Schedule I, II or III."

Private Members' Business

The second part of the bill enacts a new law, the expungement of certain drug-related convictions act. It is a piece of legislation that is meant to be retroactive, in a way, since it seeks to establish a procedure for the Parole Board of Canada to follow to expunge convictions that occurred prior to the coming into force of this bill, if it passes. This part of the bill would wipe the slate clean on past offences. Expunging a conviction means that the convicted person is deemed never to have been charged and convicted of that offence, thus allowing a criminal record to be wiped clean. However, expungement would not happen automatically. The individual would have to apply for expungement, the board would have to review the application to see if it is valid, and then a notice would have to be sent to the RCMP and related departments and agencies to have their records relating to the conviction expunged.

The third and final part of the bill also creates new legislation: the national strategy on substance use act. This new legislation would force the Department of Health to develop a strategy by consulting the community, and it would require the department to report on the results of the implementation of this strategy. Although one of the goals of the strategy is to reduce the criminalization tied to drug use, the third part of the bill proposes that the primary goal be a matter of public health, with an approach that seeks to deal with the harm caused by problematic substance use.

According to Bill C-216, the strategy must be developed in consultation with representatives of the provincial governments responsible for health care services and key stakeholders including advocacy organizations, frontline health care providers, individuals with lived experience of substance use, harm reduction workers and experts in problematic substance use and substance use disorder.

Although the Bloc is generally open to the idea of diverting people struggling with substance abuse away from the courts, we believe that Bill C-216 unfortunately misses the mark with respect to its main objective. Over the past few years, there has been a tendency to consider drug-related problems as public health issues rather than crime issues for several reasons.

We cannot ignore the serious opioid crisis that has taken hold in North America since 2016. It is a serious problem that demands a government response. There was Nixon's tough on drugs approach, which strictly addressed the criminal aspect but never achieved the desired results. There is the positive experience of countries such as Portugal and Switzerland, which adopted a public health approach to issues arising from drug use. We also have a better understanding of problems related to addiction thanks to advances in scientific knowledge in this area.

The problem with Bill C-216 in general is that it puts the cart before the horse. The third part of the bill, which deals with a strategy on substance use is likely one of the most important aspects of the bill in that what we really want to do is help people with addictions overcome them. Basically, the main point of the bill is to save lives, given that opioid use has been on the rise since the 1980s. The number of opioid deaths has risen dramatically since 2016. They went from close to 3,000 in 2016 to over 6,000 just four years later in 2020.

The problem with this new bill is the timeline, the order in which the steps are to be taken. When the bill comes into force, the claus-

es pertaining to the offence of simple possession would take effect immediately, but the national strategy would only be implemented the following year, at the earliest.

● (1400)

While there may be some immediate benefits for some people if this bill is adopted, for example, first-time offenders, the bill would have no short-term impact on people with chronic addiction problems. Most importantly, we have no idea what the national policy will look like or how it will work with the governments of Quebec and the provinces, which are responsible for health care services.

In fact, our fear is that we will fall short of our objective if we only decriminalize simple drug possession for personal use without first making sure that we have health services in order, such as support, treatment and detox measures, especially when there is a rather blatant risk of interference in Quebec's and the provinces' jurisdictions.

In a way, members seem too eager to want to build on Portugal's success to justify Bill C-216, while failing to consider what Portugal has done as a whole. While Portugal's success is widely cited as evidence that decriminalization works, the reality is much more complex.

In Portugal, an individual is generally not sent to prison if the total amount of possession does not exceed personal consumption. The individual could still face criminal sanctions, although such cases are rare. It is important to note that decriminalization is not the only measure contributing to Portugal's success. There are also diversion measures and accompanying services on the ground, such as supervised injection sites, education and reintegration resources.

Private Members' Business

It is important to understand that Portugal's policy is based on legal alternatives to simple possession of drugs for personal use. When an individual is arrested for simple possession, they are brought to the police station to determine whether the amount of drugs in their possession is below the permitted limits. Their case is then referred to a Commission for Dissuasion of Drug Addiction to assess the risks associated with their drug use. That commission then brings the individual before an expert panel of social workers, health professionals and legal advisors to assess the risks associated with the individual's behaviour. Depending on the risk, the individual is then offered a range of measures, including everything from simple education to drug treatment, fines and community service. In the most serious cases, such as repeat offenders or if other people are put at risk, individuals may be forced into treatment, and if they refuse, they could face criminal sanctions. The main objective is to encourage compliance with treatment or complete abstinence from drug use.

If Bill C-216 is passed, there is a concern that even if individuals who use drugs are not criminally charged, they will still run the risk of falling through the cracks because there will be no follow-up or systematic monitoring. That is why I spoke about putting the cart before the horse earlier.

In this context, I believe it would be more prudent to consider a more comprehensive, more holistic approach, somewhat similar to what Quebec is currently doing with the PTTCQ in particular, the Court of Quebec's addiction treatment program. The objective of this program is to help the justice system prevent crimes associated with drug addiction through measures that focus on providing treatment to offenders with drug addictions, rather than systematically treating them as criminals.

Based on what is already permitted under subsection 720(2) of the Criminal Code, the PTTCQ authorizes the court to delay sentencing so that an offender can get clean through court-supervised treatment.

The program also facilitates close collaboration between the court and addiction resources to develop a treatment plan that includes therapeutic, rehabilitation and reintegration components.

I therefore think that, while Bill C-216 has a laudable objective, it is likely doomed to fail unless we create a framework to support drug addicts before we move forward with decriminalizing simple possession. Without such a framework, there is a risk that people who do not get support will wind up being criminalized regardless, for crimes indirectly connected to their drug problem, such as theft, if they do not have access to programs like PTTCQ, which is not available everywhere. It goes without saying that we cannot successfully decriminalize simple possession without also ensuring that health care resources are available.

In conclusion, I remind members that this is yet another example of how an unconditional increase in health transfers would have a significant impact on the lives of many.

• (1405)

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a difficult conversation to have re-

garding Bill C-216 because of the context that we are debating it in. When I was approaching my speech today and what I was going to say about the bill, my first thoughts were about the incredible number of families that have been touched by this in a most profound way by having lost sons, brothers, fathers, sisters and cousins. It has left a trail of carnage in its wake.

In my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, many communities have been severely affected. What is really stark is when we look at the statistics. Yesterday, we lost 20 people to this. Today, we are going to lose another 20, and tomorrow another 20. On it will go.

British Columbia, my home province, has been the epicentre of this. In the first three months of this year alone, 548 people died. That is the nature of the street supply of drugs in so many communities across this country. We are just having too many families experience this, and it has been going on for years now. I have been a member of the House since 2015. It was in 2016 that my home province of B.C. declared a provincial health emergency. It seems that every single year that I have been in the House, we have been having the same conversation and publicly lamenting the sheer number of deaths, but we still have not figured out to put in place legislative policy to address it.

Here we are in the year 2022, and we are still talking about this. In the past six years, nearly 25,000 Canadians have died. When does the number reach a point where we become ashamed of the lack of progress that we have made? We are in a legislative chamber. As part of the Parliament of Canada, we can enact the policy to save lives. It is this House that has jurisdiction over the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. It is this House that can legislate the Criminal Code. It is the government that, through federal powers, can help coordinate a strategy to effectively deal with this crisis, but we are still talking about it. Yes, I admit some action has been taken, but the numbers show not nearly enough.

The problem is that the drugs fentanyl and carfentanyl, synthetic opioids, have completely changed the game on the ground. We now have a situation, when people go out to buy street drugs, in which it is essentially like playing Russian roulette with their lives. In my riding, I do not have to walk very far down the streets to find illicit drugs. In fact, I could probably purchase illicit drugs more quickly than I could get a prescription filled out. That is how easy it is. When we combine that with the personal trauma that people have suffered, whether physical, emotional or sexual, the multitude of reasons that people use drugs is very wide-ranging.

The fact is that it is still there, and every single day communities such as mine still see paramedics responding to this. They are still bringing out the naloxone kits, trying in vain to revive another life. Even if that person is lucky enough to be revived, they could be suffering from permanent brain injury and be a ward of our health care system for the remainder of their lives. This is where we are at, and we have to keep those people in our hearts when we are talking about this issue.

I was reading in the news from B.C. earlier this month that toxicology testing revealed that 94% of the drug samples in March contained fentanyl or one of its analogs. That is not even Russian roulette anymore. That is actually a guarantee, pretty much, at 94%. People know that if they are going out to buy street drugs, the chance that they have a dose that is going to kill them remains very high.

● (1410)

I serve in our caucus as the public safety critic, and one of my colleagues was referencing a committee study that we did on guns and gang violence. I want to echo his comments, because many of the police officers who appeared before our committee were talking about how the issues of gun violence and the illicit drug trade are so intertwined because of the obscene amounts of money that criminal networks are making with fentanyl and carfentanyl.

The street value of those drugs, when they are cut into other substances, has made this a very lucrative market. When that kind of money can be made on the streets, it always leads to conflict, and police officers across the country now tell us that whenever they go on a drug bust, they are almost always finding a massive arsenal of weapons to accompany it. The two cannot be separated from each other.

I posed a question on this to the chief of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Chief Evan Bray. For his organization, he said:

The position on decriminalization with regard to simple possession is trying to understand that putting handcuffs on someone who suffers with an addiction is not going to solve the problems. It's going to temporarily take them out of the stream, but that's all it's going to do. Unless there's a way we can get them the help they need, recidivism is going to happen and they're going to be back in that stream.

That is a summary of the failure of the criminal approach.

Having set the context, let us turn our attention now to Bill C-216, which was introduced by my friend, neighbour and colleague, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni. I want to recognize that other members of our caucus, such as the member for Vancouver Kingsway, have also tried to spearhead legislation in other Parliaments.

I also want to recognize the NDP leader, the member for Burnaby South, because it was back in 2017, during his leadership run for our party, that he first took this very bold policy position. We are now at a point, five years later, where we are actually having a serious conversation about this. Back in 2017, it was a risky position for him to take, and I want to acknowledge his courage in doing that so we could have this conversation today.

Bill C-216 would do three main things. It would repeal the personal possession offence in the Controlled Drugs and Substances

Private Members' Business

Act, something that I believe is necessary to end the criminal stigma attached to possession. It would, as a second part, expunge certain drug-related convictions. The third part, which is of course the really important one, is the enactment of a national strategy on substance use.

I have heard conversations in the House about how we need to focus on treatment. I agree. Treatment is one part of the continuum of care. However, when that subject is brought up, I always respond by saying that we cannot treat a dead person.

All of these measures have to be brought into play together. There is no one silver bullet. It is all part of a continuum of care. It is a fact, having spoken to experts on the ground in my riding, that there are people out there who are not yet ready for treatment, and if we were to put them in a treatment program, it would be a complete and total failure because they are not yet at that stage.

There are multiple interventions that need to happen in this, but one of the most important ones is to decriminalize, because we have too many people who, through the fear of criminality, are using alone and dying alone. They are doing so with no member of their family or their friends ever knowing that they were a drug user because they are ashamed to admit it. That is what the stigma does to people. It prevents people from getting the help they need.

This bill comes out of a very clear recommendation from Health Canada's expert task force, but I want to end on this. I implore members of the House and other parties still trying to figure out how they are going to vote on this to please not throw the baby out with the bathwater. Please acknowledge that this is a good idea and that it is worthy of more study. Please vote on June 1 to get this bill to committee so that we can have a wholesome discussion on it and can pave a path forward to get people the real help they need and to save lives.

● (1415)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the opioid and toxic drug supply crisis is heartbreaking and has taken a tragic toll on the families, loved ones and communities of those we have lost across Canada. I would like to thank the member for Courtenay—Alberni for his advocacy on this critical issue and for prompting this important debate in the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

The Government of Canada recognizes that the overdose crisis is one of the most serious public health threats in Canada's recent history. This unprecedented crisis is having devastating effects on people, friends and families, as well as on communities across the country.

Private Members' Business

Unfortunately, the most recent national data shows that there were 26,690 apparent opioid toxicity deaths between January 2016 and September 2021. Fentanyl and its analogues continue to be the primary causes of the crisis. Up to 86% of accidental apparent opioid toxicity deaths over the first nine months of 2021 are tied to fentanyl.

[English]

Our government recognizes that problematic substance use is, first and foremost, a public health issue. Since 2017, our government has moved forward with significant action, investing over \$800 million to address the overdose crisis and substance use-related issues. We have improved access to treatment and harm reduction, improved access to a safer supply, reduced regulatory barriers to treatment, strengthened law enforcement, developed educational products and tools for health care providers, as well as the public, and advanced research and surveillance to build the evidence base.

● (1420)

[Translation]

These key investments include \$282 million for the substance use and addictions program, which provides grants and contributions to other levels of government and to community organizations in order to address the illegal supply of toxic drugs and substance use issues.

Treatment is an essential way to help people struggling with problematic substance use who want to stop using drugs and live a healthier life. We have invested \$200 million over five years, with \$40 million ongoing each year, to improve the delivery of culturally adapted substance use treatment and prevention services in first nations communities.

Our government has also provided one-time funding of \$150 million to the provinces and territories through the emergency treatment fund in order to improve access to evidence-based treatment services. The provinces and territories are also contributing an amount matching the federal funding beyond the first \$250,000.

[English]

The evidence clearly shows that harm reduction measures save lives. Since 2017, supervised consumption sites in Canada have received more than 3.3 million visits and reversed almost 35,000 overdoses without a single death at a site. These sites also provide access to supportive and trusted relationships for people who use drugs, including opportunities to access treatment.

[Translation]

These sites made more than 148,000 referrals to social services and health care services. Since January 1, 2016, our government has increased the number of approved supervised consumption sites from one to 38. We also increased access to naloxone, a life-saving medication, including in remote and isolated indigenous communities.

Improving the safe supply will also be critical to saving lives, and we are investing more than \$63 million to extend access to a safe supply of pharmaceutical-grade alternatives.

[English]

Treating addiction as a public health issue means we are also committed to diverting people who use drugs away from the criminal justice system and toward supportive and trusted relationships in health and social services.

In December 2021, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada introduced Bill C-5, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Among other measures, the bill would have the police and prosecutors consider alternative measures, including diverting individuals to treatment programs, giving a warning or taking no further action, instead of laying charges or prosecuting individuals for simple drug possession.

[Translation]

Our government also facilitated the passage of the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act in May 2017.

In August 2020, the Public Prosecution Service of Canada released guidelines for prosecutors indicating that alternatives to criminal prosecution should be considered for simple possession for personal use, unless there are serious aggravating factors.

[English]

We also recognize the different approaches that cities, provinces, territories and other organizations are taking to address the opioid crisis, including how they are approaching the potential decriminalization of personal possession in their communities. We continue to work with these partners, many who are pursuing comprehensive, regional decriminalization proposals for their jurisdictions.

The Controlled Drugs and Substances Act generally prohibits such activities, including personal possession of controlled substances, unless those activities have been specifically authorized through regulations or an exemption under the act. Section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act gives the minister broad powers to exempt people for controlled substances from the application of any of the provisions of the act for medical or scientific purposes or if otherwise in the public interest. Currently, the federal government is reviewing requests for section 56 exemptions for the decriminalization of simple possession from the Province of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver and Toronto Public Health.

Private Members' Business

This private member's bill, Bill C-216, proposes to immediately decriminalize personal possession of controlled substances across Canada without addressing the complex issues of implementation. This does raise significant concerns. Decriminalization of the personal possession of illicit drugs at the national level requires a comprehensive and well-thought-out, multi-jurisdictional strategy around implementation. This includes ensuring adequate and appropriate health and social services resources; engagement, additional training and guidance of law enforcement; specific definitions of personal possession; public education and awareness strategies; as well as meaningful consultations with indigenous governments, partners and organizations.

Our government will ensure that these decisions are based on evidence and applied research. In getting this right, effective indicators, data and evaluation will be important to inform our approach going forward.

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

Other jurisdictions are evaluating evidence-based approaches, and we are working with our partners to find innovative solutions.

[*English*]

The mandate letter of the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health calls on the minister to advance a comprehensive strategy to address prohibitive substance use in Canada, support efforts to improve public education to reduce stigma, support provinces and territories, work with indigenous communities to provide access to a full range of evidence-based treatment and harm reduction, and create standards for substance use treatment programs.

[*Translation*]

We know that more must be done, and we will continue to work with the provinces and territories, experts, stakeholders, people with real-life experiences and local communities to put an end to this strategy.

Our government will use all the tools at its disposal to put an end to this public health crisis.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to start the debate with this: Dead people do not detox.

I want, in particular, for the Liberal and Conservative members to let that sink in. I want the Prime Minister to know that his excuse that decriminalization is not a silver bullet is a false argument to deflect his lack of courage to take meaningful action to save lives.

Let me be very clear: Overdose deaths are preventable deaths. People are dying from drug poisoning, and it does not have to be this way.

The passage of Bill C-216 will save lives. It is within the power of every member of the House to show they value life without judgment and that they want to stop the overdose crisis in their communities. All they have to do is vote for my colleague's bill, Bill C-216.

It is a bill that would decriminalize the possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use, expunge criminal records related only to minor possession convictions, and work with provinces to find health-centred solutions to end the crisis once and for all. These include ensuring a safer regulated supply of drugs and providing universal access to recovery, treatment and harm reduction services.

The overdose crisis has been wreaking devastation upon families and communities for years. In B.C., the toll has been the heaviest. The year 2021 was the deadliest yet on record for the number of overdose deaths, taking 2,224 lives too early.

Since the overdose crisis was declared a public health emergency in 2016 by the provincial medical health officer in B.C., more than 9,410 people have died of illicit drug toxicity. Just last month, there were 165 suspected drug toxicity deaths in British Columbia. That is 5.3 deaths per day, and it has become the leading cause of unnatural death in British Columbia.

In 2018, there were four and a half times more overdose deaths than deaths from motor vehicle crashes, suicides, homicides and prescription drug overdoses combined. Overdose deaths occurred across all walks of life, all age groups and all of the socio-economic spectrum. Parents of judges, doctors and teachers have lost loved ones to the overdose death crisis.

I still recall the heartbreak of a mother whose daughter became ill and needed surgery. Afterwards, her daughter became addicted to opioids due to over-prescribed painkillers. When the doctors stopped the prescription, her daughter turned to street drugs to manage her pain. There was pain and anguish on her face when it was revealed that big pharma hid the addictive nature of opioids.

I cannot imagine the devastation of a parent reeling from the shock that their child, a high school student, died of an overdose. I know too many people in my community who use drugs to help them manage the trauma they have experienced. They are just trying to survive the best they can, but that should not be a death sentence for them. I know too many people who have lost loved ones to the drug poisoning crisis. There have been 9,410 deaths since 2016, with 2,224 occurring last year and 5.3 deaths every day.

Private Members' Business

These are not just numbers. They are real people: sons, daughters, friends, husbands, mothers and loved ones. That is why we must stop this war on drugs. It has failed dismally and has done more harm than good.

The Liberal government likes to say it believes in science and medical experts. It should believe it when B.C.'s chief public health officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, recommends that the federal government decriminalize people who possess controlled substances for personal use.

• (1430)

The Conservatives like to say they believe in law and order. Well, they should believe the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police when it agrees that addiction is a public health issue and that evidence suggests that decriminalization of simple possession is an effective way to reduce the public health and public safety harms associated with substance use. We cannot arrest our way out of the overdose crisis.

Thirty jurisdictions globally have adopted or are beginning to adopt a shift in drug policy that moves away from criminalizing people who use drugs to one of decriminalization. The Portuguese model has given evidence that, when utilized along with other interventions, including harm reduction, prevention, enforcement and treatment strategies, decriminalization has led to an increase in treatment uptake, a reduction in drug-related deaths, and no increase in drug use.

In May 2021, the City of Vancouver submitted a request for an exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to Health Canada, requesting urgent action to provide an exemption that would decriminalize personal possession of illicit substances within the city's boundaries. One year later, the federal government has still not taken any meaningful action to advance this call for action.

As the Liberals drag their feet on this, with every passing day more people are dying from this overdose crisis. Make no mistake, the cost of inaction is real human lives. It also creates persistent personal, social and structural stigma against addiction, increases risk-taking and is an impediment to public health harm reduction initiatives.

The self-proclaimed feminist Prime Minister should know this: Criminalization causes greater harm to women. Women incarcerated for drug offences in B.C. tend to be younger and often undereducated. They commonly have a diagnosed mental disorder and a history of victimization. Incarcerated women have a higher rate of hepatitis C and HIV infections than men. Many are mothers. Separating children from their mothers is devastating, often resulting in foster care placement. Children with parents in prison are more likely to drop out of school and become involved with the prison system themselves, thus continuing the vicious cycle.

As lawmakers, it is our job to put in place policies that will help break this cycle. That is why I urge every member in this House to support Bill C-216. At least, let us send it to committee so that we could have that vigorous debate and so that we could invite witnesses to come before us to answer some of those questions that I just heard the Liberal parliamentary secretary raise. Even if mem-

bers do not support this motion or have doubts about it, they should do the right thing by sending it to committee to hear witnesses.

Aside from decriminalization, Bill C-216 also calls for the expungement of criminal records that are solely related to minor possession. A criminal record poses often insurmountable barriers for people in finding employment and housing. They should not have to wear that as a noose around their neck. We need to change our laws.

The harms caused by interacting with the criminal justice system and the additional barriers posed by a criminal record throw people into a vicious cycle that often impacts the most vulnerable in our society. That is exactly why the NDP motion also asks the government to work with provinces to develop a strategy informed by health-centred solutions that addresses the root causes of problematic substance use.

To ensure a successful response to the overdose crisis, decriminalization must be complemented by the necessary supports. We can break this cycle today if we can act with courage and compassion.

I ask the government to end the war on drugs and save lives by decriminalizing personal possession now. The NDP motion is calling on the government to do exactly that. There can be no more delays. The time to act is now.

• (1435)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate.

I would like to inform the member that he has only four and a half minutes for his speech.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House to talk about the important bill introduced by my NDP colleague from Courtenay—Alberni, Bill C-216.

COVID-19 took the lives of thousands of Canadians over the past two years, and we have devoted a lot of time and energy to helping those affected by the virus and preventing the loss of even more lives. Meanwhile, another crisis has been happening for years that has not received nearly as much attention.

Today, it is claiming the lives of hundreds of people every month. Thousands of people have died over the past five years because of the opioid crisis and addiction and substance abuse problems. It has been a literal carnage. We need to act quickly and do something about this.

Private Members' Business

We have here a solution based on science, studies, reports and the opinions of experts. In the House, members who say that they follow the science when they vote and take action must support Bill C-216 because everyone who has been following this issue over the years is telling us that this is the way to go, that this is the first step in saving people's lives. We must absolutely send this bill to committee.

I hear everyone here saying that drug addiction is not a police issue or a legal issue, but a health issue. If members truly believe that, they must support the bill at second reading to send it to parliamentary committee. The committee will improve, enhance and study its clauses as needed and will bring in witnesses and other experts.

I think this is the right thing to do. If members are sincere in saying that this is, above all, a health problem and a public health problem, then we must decriminalize simple possession of drugs.

Two or three weeks ago, my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni came to Montreal. We had the opportunity to visit groups that help people who are in crisis, who have drug problems or who are at risk of dying. We visited the organizations Dopamine and Cactus, and everyone told us that the members of the House need to vote in favour of Bill C-216. It is the right thing to do. The bill is not perfect, but it is definitely a good step forward. We need this.

My NDP colleague and I came out of the Cactus office and a woman in crisis was lying on the sidewalk with a worker. She looked at us. I guess we must have looked somewhat official. She told us that we need to help these organizations, because they saved her life and do the same for dozens of other people, every day, every week. We need to help organizations like Dopamine and Cactus.

Next, we went to see doctors, social workers and researchers at CHUM who specialize in addiction and substance abuse, all of them women. They told us that this is exactly what they had been asking for for years, that it just makes sense to decriminalize simple possession of drugs and not to use the police or prisons for these people, which deprives them of the help they need. It is true—a prison is not a hospital. It serves other needs, other functions in life.

Maybe social workers should already be prepared, funding should be increased and outreach services should be available, but I think that, as federal lawmakers, our responsibility is to take action where possible right now. If we determine that amending the Criminal Code is the thing to do, those amendments are our responsibility.

In this case, it is the right thing to do. All the international evidence proves it. Everyone on the front lines in Quebec and Canada is asking us to do it. Even if people are unsure or have doubts, they should at least vote for Bill C-216 in principle so it can go to a parliamentary committee. The committee members can amend it, fix it and improve it as necessary.

However, if members refuse and kill Bill C-216 right away, that is a sign that they are not listening to people on the front lines and that more people will lose their lives. We will end up back at square one and nothing will happen. More people will die in the streets of Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto.

I think it is our responsibility to be courageous, take that step and vote in favour of Bill C-216 so it can at least go to committee.

• (1440)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, at the conclusion of this stage of debate on Bill C-216, I first want to thank the members who have spoken today. Canadians deserve a debate on how to respond to a public health emergency that has been raging for more than six years and has cost more than 27,000 lives. Bill C-216 is the first piece of comprehensive legislation aimed at addressing this crisis debated in this House.

With respect to my colleagues here today, I believe who we really need to hear from are the experts in public health and substance use, the people working on the front lines of this crisis, and those with lived and living experience who have been directly affected. Those are the people I have been speaking to since I became the NDP's critic of mental health and harm reduction.

Over the last few months, I have travelled the country to hear how the toxic drug crisis is affecting communities across Canada. What I have heard is that people are frustrated that the government is not doing its job to help Canadians who are struggling. They are angry that politicians do not seem to care about the lives of their loved ones. When COVID-19 hit, the government acted with a sense of urgency and was willing to take bold steps to protect Canadians. It worked rapidly to roll out income supports and to procure enough vaccines for every Canadian.

The government's response to COVID-19 has not been perfect, but it showed a willingness to act and adjust as needed because inaction poses a greater risk, yet, after 27,000 deaths in the overdose epidemic, the government is still talking about pilot programs. It has done consultations and commissioned reports that have seemingly gone unheard. I hope all members will agree that it is time not only to listen but also to act like lives depend on it, because they do.

Last spring, Health Canada commissioned an expert task force to make recommendations on federal drug policy. The task force was composed of people with expertise in mental health and addictions, public health, law enforcement, criminology and harm reduction. The task force also benefited from the lived experience of members of Black and indigenous communities, people who use drugs and those who have lost loved ones due to drug-related deaths. The task force published two reports that convey a very clear message: Canada's drug policies are not working, and they need to change. They are causing irreparable harm to our communities. They are costing huge sums of money, and they are costing lives.

Private Members' Business

The proposals in Bill C-216 reflect the recommendations contained in the expert task force's reports. This bill would work to stop the harms of ineffective drug policies and set Canada on the path to dealing with substance use in a comprehensive and compassionate way. Before members vote on this bill on June 1, I urge them all to read these reports or, at the very least, their recommendations.

My other request today to all members is that, even if they do not agree with the full contents of Bill C-216, please vote in favour of sending it to committee. They need to hear from the experts and the people dealing with the impacts of this crisis and bring amendments to the table.

Senator Gwen Boniface, the former commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police, and Senator Vern White, former chief of police for Durham Region and for the City of Ottawa, both support getting this bill to committee. If members are considering voting Bill C-216 down at this stage, I ask them to think about what they will tell constituents in six months, twelve months or three years' time. This crisis is continuing to escalate, and every day more Canadians are losing someone they love. How will members explain to them that they did not think it was even worth discussing solutions?

This morning a staff member of mine shared the words she spoke at her brother's funeral after he died of accidental overdose poisoning a week before his 35th birthday. She commented that every day there are Canadians writing speeches for funerals that should not be happening.

In the words she shared was a quote from her brother's favourite poet, Oscar Wilde, who wrote, "The only difference between the saint and the sinner is that every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future."

She went on to say, "I wish Ryan had another chance to build the future he wanted. We are all flawed, and I hope through his memo-

ry we can remind the world that every life is beautiful and has value. Everyone deserves compassion and love, even in their darkest times."

With this bill, we have a chance to send the message that we care about people who are struggling and that we will be there for them. We have a chance to save lives. I urge the House to rise to the occasion.

• (1445)

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

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I request that the motion be adopted on division.

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

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 1, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[*English*]

It being 2:48 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, May 30, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:48 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Friday, May 20, 2022

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

An Act for the Substantive Equality of Canada's Official Languages

Bill C-13—Time Allocation Motion

Ms. Petitpas Taylor	5677
Mr. Brassard	5677
Ms. Normandin	5677
Mr. Boulerice	5678
Mr. Lauzon	5678
Mr. Godin	5678
Mr. Blanchette-Joncas	5679
Mr. Julian	5679
Mr. Arseneault	5679
Mr. Ste-Marie	5680
Mr. Samson	5680
Ms. Mathysen	5681
Mr. Gerretsen	5681
Motion agreed to	5683

Business of the House

Ms. Mathysen	5683
(Motion agreed to)	5683

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The East Coast Trail

Ms. Thompson	5683
--------------------	------

Naturopathic Medicine Week

Mr. Carrie	5684
------------------	------

Retirement Congratulations

Ms. Diab	5684
----------------	------

Violent Crime

Ms. Zarrillo	5684
--------------------	------

55th Quebec Games

Mr. Iacono	5684
------------------	------

Paddling and Rowing in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour

Mr. Fisher	5685
------------------	------

Vaccine Mandates

Mrs. Block	5685
------------------	------

Telecommunications

Mrs. Sudds	5685
------------------	------

Mullivaikkal Remembrance Day

Mr. Hallan	5685
------------------	------

Graduating Class of 2022

Mr. Kelloway	5685
--------------------	------

Public Safety

Mr. Patzer	5686
------------------	------

Government Accountability

Mr. McLean	5686
------------------	------

Fire Department in Greater Longueuil Area

Mrs. Romanado	5686
---------------------	------

National School Food Program

Ms. Kwan	5686
----------------	------

Christian Ouellet

Ms. Larouche	5686
--------------------	------

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Mr. Brassard	5687
--------------------	------

James Quong

Mr. Hanley	5687
------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Justice

Mr. Paul-Hus	5687
Mr. Anandasangaree	5687
Mr. Paul-Hus	5687
Mr. Anandasangaree	5688
Mr. Paul-Hus	5688
Mr. Anandasangaree	5688
Mrs. Kusie	5688
Mr. Anandasangaree	5688
Mrs. Kusie	5688
Mr. Anandasangaree	5688

Official Languages

Ms. Normandin	5688
Ms. Petitpas Taylor	5688
Ms. Normandin	5689
Mr. Rodriguez	5689

Service Canada

Mr. Boulerice	5689
Ms. Gould	5689

Public Safety

Mr. Masse	5689
Mr. Champagne	5689

Taxation

Mr. Brassard	5689
Mr. Duguid	5689
Mr. Perkins	5690
Ms. Bendayan	5690
Mr. Lewis (Essex)	5690
Ms. Bendayan	5690

Seniors

Mrs. Kramp-Neuman	5690
Mr. Fisher	5690
Mrs. Kramp-Neuman	5690

Mr. Fisher	5690
Housing	
Mr. Kelly	5691
Mr. Hussen	5691
Agriculture and Agri-Food	
Mr. Perron	5691
Ms. Bibeau	5691
Mr. Perron	5691
Ms. Bibeau	5691
Health	
Mr. Van Popta	5691
Ms. Koutrakis	5691
Passports	
Mr. Soroka	5691
Ms. Gould	5692
Health	
Mr. Kurek	5692
Mrs. Fortier	5692
Mr. Cooper	5692
Mr. van Koeverden	5692
Mr. Johns	5692
Mrs. Brière	5692
Persons with Disabilities	
Ms. Zarrillo	5692
Mr. Kusmierczyk	5693
Tourism Industry	
Ms. Lapointe	5693
Ms. Bendayan	5693
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Mr. Hallan	5693
Mrs. Lalonde	5693
Mr. Hallan	5693
Mrs. Lalonde	5693
Passports	
Mr. McCauley	5693
Ms. Gould	5694
Mr. McCauley	5694
Ms. Gould	5694
Taxation	
Mr. Ste-Marie	5694
Ms. Bendayan	5694
Mr. Ste-Marie	5694
Ms. Bendayan	5694
Natural Resources	
Mr. McLean	5694
Mr. Duguid	5694
Mr. McLean	5694
Mr. Duguid	5695
The Economy	
Mr. Mazier	5695
Mr. Beech	5695

Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Blois	5695
Mr. Badawey	5695
Passports	
Mr. Waugh	5695
Ms. Gould	5695
Public Safety	
Mr. Reid	5696
Ms. Damoff	5696
Taxation	
Mr. Ruff	5696
Mr. Virani	5696
CBC/Radio-Canada	
Mr. Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	5696
Mr. Rodriguez	5696
Airline Industry	
Mr. Bachrach	5696
Ms. Koutrakis	5697

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions	
Mr. Gerretsen	5697
Motion	5697
Motion agreed to	5698

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Online News Act	
Bill C-18—Notice of Time Allocation Motion	
Ms. Tassi	5698
Act for the Substantive Equality of Canada's Official Languages	
Bill C-13. Second reading	5699
Mr. Blanchette-Joncas	5699
Mr. Godin	5700
Mr. Boulerice	5700
Mr. Godin	5700
Mr. Ste-Marie	5701
Mr. Boulerice	5702
Mr. Lloyd	5702
Supplementary Estimates (A), 2022-23	
Mrs. Fortier	5702

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Health-based Approach to Substance Use Act	
Bill C-216. Second reading	5703
Mr. Van Popta	5703
Ms. Normandin	5704
Mr. MacGregor	5706
Mrs. Brière	5707

Ms. Kwan..... 5709
Mr. Boulerice..... 5710

Mr. Johns 5711
Division on motion deferred..... 5712

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