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# House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, April 28, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

### CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT

The House resumed from March 31 consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would first ask for the consent of the House to share my time with my friend, the one and only member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Madam Speaker, during the first part of my speech, in March, I spoke in favour of this bill. It is a good bill. It is a step toward transparency that will help fight tax evasion and fraud.

The bill is respectful of the provinces. In fact, Quebec's registry has been in place for almost a month.

However, the tax cheats who were exposed in the Paradise papers did not create their shell companies in Canada; they created them in tax havens. The bill does nothing to address that. The work has only just begun.

Cracking down on fraudsters who use tax havens requires a global registry—not just a registry of the real company owners, but also a registry of real beneficial owners of trusts. I am thinking, for example, of the real beneficial owners of the Isle of Man trusts that KPMG Canada created for Canadian tax evaders, the ones who were granted amnesty by the Canada Revenue Agency. It sounds like a huge undertaking, but it is not. In fact, this registry already exists to a large extent, and it is maintained, for one, in Luxembourg by a consortium of financial institutions. Even tax cheats like

their banks to know they have assets somewhere; it is good for their credit.

This registry is available to financial institutions, but not to governments that want to go after fraud. I think we can all agree that there is something wrong with that. Transparency, public registries and so on are excellent tools against fraud, but they do nothing against profiteers, against those who take advantage of all the loopholes in the Income Tax Act to use tax havens legally. Those individuals do not need to hide their income. All they need is a good accountant to make sure their income is not taxable, even when it is declared.

The United States forced Canada's hand by imposing its idea of endorsing a 15% minimum global tax rate at the G20. The latest budget introduces Joe Biden's minimum global tax rate. Using tax havens will become less attractive, but the government is doing the bare minimum to fight tax havens. Income repatriated from tax havens that have information exchange agreements with Canada remains tax-free. This has to stop.

Yes, we will support Bill C-42, but it does not go far enough. A registry is good, but tax fairness is better.

• (1010)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, a part of dealing with the issue is bringing in legislation, but there are also budgetary measures that the government has taken in the last few years. We have beefed up the resources for CRA: A few budgets back it was close to half a billion dollars, and several hundred million dollars followed that.

I am wondering if my colleague could provide his thoughts. Yes, the legislation is really important, but along with that legislation one has to establish, as we have, the financial resources, in good part, to be able to deal with the issue at hand.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Madam Speaker, I have a simple answer: Yes, but all that is not enough.

I want to talk about the example I gave at the end of my speech. In committee we looked at the issue of who really profited from the Isle of Man trusts created by KPMG for Canadian tax cheats. We worked for a long time on that issue.

*Government Orders*

In the United States, when the same thing was done, there were investigations, criminal prosecutions and even jail time. The IRS, the Canada Revenue Agency counterpart, put a stop to it. Here, there have been no criminal prosecutions and no jail time. Even though we have laws, even though we have the funding, we do not have the will. The minister refuses to use her discretionary authority to make the CRA do more.

We must change the way things are done by this government and the CRA, because we can see that our laws and funding are still not enough.

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, allow me to return to the KPMG issue and the tax fraud scheme for which it faced criminal charges in the United States but was cleared of wrongdoing by the Canada Revenue Agency.

At the time, we reminded the Minister of National Revenue that she had the power, by law, to launch an investigation that would have been led by a Tax Court of Canada judge. The minister still insists that the CRA is independent and that she cannot launch an investigation. Clearly, she is unfamiliar with the law.

Despite all these lofty legislative initiatives, I wonder what my colleague thinks about the message this is sending about Canadian leadership in fighting international tax fraud.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend from Mirabel for the question.

The minister came to committee and told us that she did not want to get involved in this, that she considered the Canada Revenue Agency to be independent. However, Mr. Lareau, a global tax expert, came to committee and told us that the minister was the only person in the country who had the power to launch an investigation. She has the power but is choosing not to use it, while the government is choosing to leave her in her position. It is not good enough, and it is unacceptable.

We are seeing some progress being made worldwide under the leadership of the United States. The Biden administration is saying enough is enough. The wealthy need to pay a minimum of 15%. Now the G20, the OECD and other groups of rich countries are following suit.

From day one, Canada has systematically been lagging behind others. It also does the minimum and maintains this system of impunity. The message being sent to KPMG and potential beneficial owners is that there will be no consequences if they try; at best, they will pay less taxes, at worst, they will have to pay it back. The message that is being sent is unacceptable.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we know that the federal registry is not enough to fight money laundering because most small and medium-sized businesses in Canada are regulated by the individual provinces and territories.

Does my Bloc Québécois colleague think that the Government of Quebec could enter into an agreement with the federal government to improve the federal level's capacity to fight money laundering while respecting Quebec's jurisdictions?

• (1015)

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question, which he asked in excellent French. I really appreciate that.

In my opinion, what we are seeing in this bill is a possible harmonization with the provinces. It seems to be respectful of the rights of the provinces. For example, Quebec has had its own registry for a month now. This will require collaboration and information sharing, as with all countries around the world, but things seem to be on the right track. Obviously, we must always do more to fight against money laundering, and our job is to remain vigilant to ensure that everything works well and that we can do more.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to a bill that is of crucial importance to the Quebec and Canadian economies, specifically, Bill C-42, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts.

Bill C-42 was introduced in the House of Commons to modernize the Canada Business Corporations Act and make it more competitive and adapted to the current needs of businesses. The amendments to the act seek to enhance the transparency, responsibility and sustainability of Canadian businesses while ensuring their competitiveness on the international stage.

The bill has several important provisions. First, it introduces an obligation for corporations to declare their real economic interests to enhance transparency and fight money laundering and terrorist financing. This provision will also help prevent corporations from hiding their true ownership behind opaque structures and improve the public's confidence in the integrity of the corporate system.

The bill also brings in a new corporate social and environmental responsibility strategy. Corporations will be held accountable for social, environmental and governance factors in their decisions and their trade action. The purpose of this provision is to encourage businesses to adopt a long-term vision and make a positive contribution to society in addition to generating profits.

My colleague from Joliette, who is also our finance critic, had questions the last time this bill was introduced. His question was the following: If business A belongs to company B, which belongs to corporation C, can we find out who the beneficial owner is? What happens when a business is in another, less co-operative country where information is not automatically shared, like in a tax haven? Will Bill C-42 allow us to identify the true owner?

This question needs to be answered. Countless reports and investigations on multinational corporate activities indicate that organizational charts and operational structures are not always clear. The takeover of national security sensitive sectors or sectors that might jeopardize our supply chains is a real concern for our party.

*Government Orders*

The example we are talking about here of a company that is owned by a chain of other companies can create a situation where it is difficult to identify the real owner, particularly if one or more of the companies are located in countries that do not have automatic information-sharing agreements.

For example, I am thinking of two places in particular from a case I was looking at recently, where, at the centre of the company's complex structure were shell companies located in Labuan, a territory of Malaysia, and the British Virgin Islands, two places where strict laws and secrecy prevent the public and foreign courts from accessing information about the real owners of these companies.

The two shell corporations were involved in transactions in France, Brazil and the United States. How are those countries managing this issue right now? Does the existing legislation provide tools for better monitoring and more flexibility in dealing with the challenges of the ongoing technological transition? I hope so.

Although the new provisions of the bill improve the transparency of Canadian companies, they do not necessarily make it possible for Canadian authorities to identify the real owners of Canadian companies owned by entities located in uncooperative countries or tax havens.

In such cases, Canadian authorities may have to rely on other methods to identify beneficial owners, such as requesting information from foreign authorities, using agreements for mutual legal assistance or relying on other sources of information such as media reports or leaked documents. It is therefore important that the teams monitoring and conducting assessments are well equipped.

In February 2020, the Quebec government announced its intention to create a registry of beneficial owners of companies. Bill 78, an act to modernize legislative provisions respecting legal auditing, was introduced in the Quebec National Assembly in June 2020 and passed in December of the same year. Bill 78 contains provisions to create a registry of beneficial owners and make it public.

We could take a closer look at the challenges of setting up such a registry and determine where the various provinces stand on this issue. How will the registry work? I look forward to hearing from officials on this issue.

It is important to note that Canada has a number of information exchange agreements with other countries, including tax information exchange agreements that would allow Canadian authorities to access information from foreign companies operating in Canada.

- (1020)

These agreements have made it easier for Canadian authorities to identify beneficial owners, even in cases where companies are owned by entities located in uncooperative jurisdictions or tax havens. I would really like to have a chance to hear the opinions of experts, as well as some recommendations for conditions that could be considered for the next round of negotiations with certain countries.

The bill also includes amendments to strengthen shareholders' rights. It gives shareholders the right to vote on executive compensation and management succession plans. This provision will ensure greater transparency and accountability to shareholders, while

increasing board members' accountability. We are pleased that some of our recommendations caught the attention of the department and have been included in Bill C-42.

Finally, the bill introduces amendments to facilitate access to capital for Canadian corporations. It simplifies the process for issuing shares and eliminates some existing restrictions, making it easier and more efficient for companies to raise capital. In short, the act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts is a crucial bill for the future of our economy in Quebec and in Canada.

The proposed amendments aim to strengthen the transparency, accountability and sustainability of Canadian companies, while enhancing their ability to compete internationally. As a member of Parliament, I am certain that this legislation is necessary to protect the interests of Quebecers and Canadians and to ensure long-term economic growth.

In conclusion, I would like to draw a comparison related to my duties as critic for sport, a field in which good governance has been raised as an issue. Governance and accountability are key factors in sport. Governance refers to the way sport organizations are managed and led, while accountability refers to the way actors involved in sport are held accountable for their actions.

In terms of governance, sport organizations must be managed transparently, effectively and fairly. Decisions must be democratic, and all stakeholders must have a say in the decision-making process. Governance structures must also be accountable to their members and to stakeholders.

Accountability in sports has to do with how those involved are held responsible for their actions. That can include the responsibility of athletes when it comes to fair play and following the rules and the responsibility of coaches and the heads of sports organizations when it comes to keeping players safe and promoting a healthy sports environment.

In the end, good governance and accountability are essential to ensuring the integrity and durability of sports. Sports organizations must be transparent in how they operate, accountable to their stakeholders and held responsible for their actions in order to maintain the trust and respect of fans and sports communities. It is unfortunate that the funding was established without a full understanding of what sports organizations would have to do to demonstrate real change. Obviously, I am thinking here of the government restoring funding to Hockey Canada.

We need to ensure that the intentions of Bill C-42 live up to expectations, particularly those that will be expressed before the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

*Government Orders*

I therefore call on all members of the House to support this important bill and to work together to pass it as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, creating a public, searchable corporate registry would ensure a much higher sense of accountability, and the government over the last number of years has expressed its interest in ensuring that everyone is paying their fair share when it comes to taxes and that there is more transparency. However, it is also important to recognize, as I did in the previous question I asked the member's colleague, that there have been significant amounts of financial resources allocated to the CRA. That money is there to support the idea of looking at who the people are who are paying taxes.

I am wondering if my colleague could provide his thoughts. It is great that Ottawa is doing it and the Province of Quebec is moving forward on it, but it is really important that we see consistency from coast to coast, with other provinces and territories also providing similar legislation.

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, everyone must collaborate, but the federal government must show leadership and set an example on the international stage. It must send the message that it will no longer tolerate tax havens and fraudulent actions. For me, that is a problem. Let us take the Panama papers, for example. Quebec showed leadership. It recouped more money than the federal government, so yes, collaboration is important.

I have looked at Quebec laws. The co-operative financial sector, Desjardins for example, is governed by Quebec's laws, and I find that it is much more effective in fighting these types of situations. There are things to think about, of course, but the federal government must be able to set the example and put an end to tax fraud.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I know that the Bloc Québécois will be supporting this bill. I would like to know if they are open to accepting some amendments to protect the privacy of small and medium-sized businesses and individuals, in certain cases, and to create more rules so that this work is not left to the civil servants after the bill is passed.

Is the Bloc Québécois open to protecting confidentiality in some cases?

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, I cannot help but think of a debate that my colleague raised in the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. The question was whether we were entitled to know the details of an \$8-billion to \$13-billion federal investment in a Volkswagen project. That element of transparency was at the heart of our discussions.

I can also draw a parallel with sport. Confidentiality agreements keep athletes silent and force them to keep quiet when they are victims. Confidentiality is a very delicate issue. It is always arbitrary. I think we need to be able to really reflect on that.

I am counting on my colleague to bring experts on this issue to committee so that we can come to an agreement and come up with

the best possible amendments to this legislation, to make it as robust as possible.

[*English*]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, my colleague very clearly outlined the problems and what more needs to be done, especially by Canada and the international community, about the sheer amount of wealth we lose out on every year to tax evasion and dirty money funnelling through the system.

One of the parts in the bill to ensure compliance is a \$5,000 penalty for corporations and up to \$200,000 for individuals. I respect the fact that the legislation is trying to uncover the identity of the individual, but what does the member think about the paltry \$5,000 fine for corporations? We know there are lots of avenues open to people to hide their wealth in corporate structures. Does he think that this particular financial penalty may need to be looked at and perhaps stiffened to ensure better compliance with the legislation?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, I think harsh penalties are needed. We must not give criminals a chance in life. Like my colleague, I am a progressive person who believes in sharing the wealth.

It is pretty rich for the federal government to claim that it cannot provide decent health transfers because it does not have the money. We know where that money is. At the end of day, it means that our seniors, people aged 65 and older, cannot increase their income, and it means that our emergency rooms are overflowing. That is because our money is sitting in tax havens. Firm action is needed.

[*English*]

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise today and speak to Bill C-42. There is a lot of talk in this place about government gatekeepers, and rightly so. There are a lot of important decisions made within government that have an impact on Canadians' lives, and Parliament is a place to hold the decision-makers to account and to press for better decisions. Elections are the place to press for better decision-makers. This is the place to press for better decisions.

*Government Orders*

I think the case that the New Democrats have been trying to make throughout this Parliament and many others is that there is not just the problem of government gatekeeping; there are actually a lot of private sector gatekeepers. Too often, the leader of the Conservative Party and this government are either ignoring them or working with them behind the scenes to try to create more room for their power and their influence, which is not regularly held to account by a democratically elected Parliament, and to allow their power to flourish. If we look at our economy, there are a lot of ways in which they are able to do that, including a lot of rules around commercial secrecy and other ways. There are people who own significant chunks of our economy, whether that is our land, our real estate, our manufacturing or our resources, and we do not actually have a good way of knowing who those people are.

That creates a lot of problems for Canadians, who feel the pinch of that power acting in the economy, through unjustified price hikes, for example, the likes of which we have seen a lot of in the last few years in Canada. A significant contributor to inflation has been outsized price increases in a number of industries. There are also people who are hiding behind corporation numbers and making important land-use policy decisions because of the power of their own ownership. Yes, municipalities have a role to play in zoning but we also know that ownership matters a lot and people can choose to do a lot of things with their property. In some cases that has a real impact on communities, and we do not even know who is doing the work. That is why something like a public beneficial ownership registry is so important, because it will actually allow us to put names to the people who have an important controlling stake in certain parts of our local economies and our national economy.

That is important for any number of reasons. One is that we know that Canada is known internationally as a place where a lot of money gets laundered. I think it is a sad fact about Canada's reputation and Canada's actions in the world that we have allowed ourselves to be a place that people look to in order to launder the proceeds of crime. That is something that has been going on for a long time. In fact, the Canadian banking industry had an important role to play in setting up tax havens in other places.

Canadian bankers could go to places like the Bahamas or the Caicos Islands, where it was advantageous to say, "Oh, we are not like those Americans; we are allied with the Brits." They could do that and get their hands into the local economy there and set up a banking infrastructure that would serve their interests and the interests of their clients, when it suited them better to say, "Oh, well, one cannot bank directly with the Americans but one can bank with us and we are buddy-buddy with them." They did that too, and they actually helped create the international infrastructure of tax havens that is now costing Canadians anywhere from \$30 billion to \$40 billion a year in lost taxable income because they are pushing it out of the country. As I say often, it has been hard even to know who some of the beneficiaries of these things are. When it comes to money laundering, if we want to get serious about taking action, it is important to be able to identify the beneficiaries of various corporate holdings. A public beneficial ownership registry would help with that.

When it comes to Russia's completely unwarranted and illegal invasion of Ukraine, we saw Canada come out of the gate quickly

with a lot of strong words about sanctions, but the follow-up, in terms of enforcement, has been rather pathetic. There is no evidence of Canada actually doing a lot of meaningful work to follow up on those sanctions and to make Russia hurt. One of the reasons why that is the case, and I think there is more that the government can do under the existing rules, is that it needs tools like a public beneficial ownership registry in order to be able to effect that work well. That will help identify the natural persons behind the corporate persons and make it easier for us to pursue those folks in the appropriate way.

● (1030)

I talked a bit about tax havens already, and I have talked about the problem of money laundering. The fact of the matter is that when we talk about the people at the top, who make the most money, we are not just talking about salaries. Usually the wealthiest do not make most of their money through an annual salary. They make most of their money in rent off various kinds of assets, whether real estate assets or other kinds of assets. They get dividends; that is a form of rent on the capital that they invest in companies. That is how they make their money.

If we accept the findings of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, from a year and a half or two years ago, about wealth distribution in Canada, this follows a trend for a lot of western countries. The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that now 40% of Canadians are sharing 1% of Canada's wealth, and 1% of Canadians own and control 40% of Canada's wealth. If members think that is completely out of whack, I agree completely.

That is part of what is driving many of the problems that most Canadians, who are not in that top 1%, are experiencing. Those are the folks who are really struggling with inflation. Those are the folks who cannot find a home. Those are the folks who do not know how they are going to get to work because they cannot afford the car they have.

That is not just a function of the carbon tax, which the Conservatives would have people believe. What is wrong with accepting that narrative is that it does not appreciate the problem, so it does not offer a real solution. Cutting the carbon tax is not going to fix those structural deficits. It is not the carbon tax that has led to massive wealth inequality, and it is not the way we are going to solve it.

*Government Orders*

One way we might solve it is by having a tax, not just on high income, but on high wealth. In order to do that, we need to be able to track the wealth of the 1% that owns and controls 40% of Canada's wealth. The way to do that is through a public beneficial ownership registry, which would make it easier to identify the real people, who are far fewer than the many corporate personas across the economy. If we could trace it back, we would find that it is a much smaller number of people who are behind and who are the recipients of so much of Canada's wealth and resources. A public beneficial ownership registry is important in that respect.

Partly because of the conflict and the illegal war in Ukraine, many of our international partners are moving forward quickly on public beneficial ownership registries. This legislation is important because it keeps Canada well within the international norm, which, on this issue, is moving in the right direction. This is not something Canada should be falling behind on, so I am pleased with the bill.

Folks at Publish What You Pay Canada have done some excellent work, first of all, suggesting what a public beneficial ownership registry should look like, and then following up and providing useful feedback on the legislation. The good news is that they are largely satisfied, and I think a lot of folks who follow this kind of issue feel that this is pretty good legislation.

There has been discussion in the debate so far in the House about how so-called stacked ownership structures or different corporate ownership structures could be used to evade the public beneficial ownership registry. I think that is an important thing for us to look at in committee.

New Democrats are certainly open to discussions about how to improve the legislation, but I feel it is important that we do keep this moving at a good pace so that we keep up not only with our international partners, who have accepted the wisdom of having this kind of registration, but also with many provinces within Canada, which have seen the wisdom of that and have been acting in their own jurisdictions to implement a public beneficial ownership registry.

One of the good components of the design of this federal registry is that it is meant to be a registry that can be compatible with provincial efforts and allow provinces to onboard at different times as they have their own debates and pass their own legislation in their provincial legislatures. I understand the government is working on this. I commend it for that effort; I think that is a good thing. The hope is that we will eventually have a registry in every province and territory that will contribute seamlessly to the public beneficial ownership registry of Canada, and that is a very good thing.

With all those reasons for having a public beneficial ownership registry in mind, and some optimism about the course that this bill has taken and the good work done so far, I am very much looking forward to voting in favour of this at second reading and sending it to committee, so that we can enhance the bill where possible and ensure that Canada quickly joins the ranks of countries across the world that have public beneficial ownership registries.

• (1035)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate a number of the comments the member has made. The issue of tax fairness is really important to Canadians. It is one of the reasons why one of the very first actions this government took upon being elected back in 2015 was to establish an increase in the tax on Canada's wealthiest 1%. We see that as a very strong positive. At the same time, we enhanced the tax break for Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it. Through the years, we have been able to invest a great deal of money, in the hundreds of millions of dollars, to ensure the CRA has the financial resources to reinforce the issue of tax fairness and go after individuals who are trying to avoid paying taxes.

What are the member's thoughts with respect to other provincial legislatures across the country and the important role they play in passing legislation of a similar nature?

• (1040)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Madam Speaker, as I was saying in my concluding remarks, it is very important that the provinces be on board. Many provinces are showing leadership already. I think it is one of the virtues of the way the government is proceeding on this that provinces will be able to onboard and provide information out of their own registries into the federal registry. I understand there has been a lot of discussion between the federal government and the provinces.

What I would say with respect to the tax fairness points that my colleague raised is simply this. As Canadians, we look around at other jurisdictions and see revelations like the Panama papers and others. We hear the government talk about investing in recovering some of those funds, but the record is that Canada has not and other jurisdictions have. When we hear about the resources given to the CRA, they seem to be spent more on chasing the poor to recover CERB funds, which they were encouraged to get by this very government, while the big tax cheats are getting away with it, either through tax havens or through the Canada wage subsidy program, from which the government has not even deigned to try to recover a dime.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member opposite has given any consideration to the kind of amendments he would want to see made to this bill in order to improve it.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Madam Speaker, one thing that has emerged from debate in the House is that the question of stacked ownership structures is something we need to look at. I will not prejudice the outcome of that study by already thinking I know the answer to that, but I certainly think this is something the committee should be looking into. I hope that, in its wisdom, the committee will find some recommendations that make sense and can improve the bill in that regard.



*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, in the past, it has been common for the government to pass imperfect but still useful legislation and then tell us that it has done everything it can, it has taken action and there is nothing left to do.

This was true in the case of the whistle-blower legislation, which was passed 17 years ago. It is full of flaws, but for 17 years, we have been told that the job is done, even though there is no protection.

I have a question for the member for Elmwood—Transcona. Once we pass the bill that is before us today, will the job be done? What are the next major steps for the government if it really wants to get tough on tax evasion, especially internationally?

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Madam Speaker, the short answer is no. The work will not end with the passage of this bill.

I would say it is not a matter of resources, because the Canada Revenue Agency has a lot of resources, but rather a matter of resource allocation. The agency is heavily focused right now on recovering CERB overpayments from Canadians who are already experiencing financial hardship.

When it comes to the high rollers with deep pockets, however, the agency leaves them alone. It really is a resource allocation issue. The Agency needs to focus on these high rollers. It has to stop chasing after people who do not have the means to repay the CERB—that is not a wise investment. It should be chasing down people who have the money to pay back what they owe.

[*English*]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague's remarks regarding the Conservatives' crusade against carbon pricing, because he is right. If we were to get rid of carbon pricing tomorrow, it would do nothing to change the structural deficit that exists in our economy and the fact that we have a system today where 40% of Canadians control 1% of the wealth, and 1% of Canadians control 40% of the wealth. There has been a massive hoovering of wealth from a large group of Canadians to a very small group. That is why we need a beneficial registry; we need to see who is benefiting from these obscene amounts of wealth.

Over the decades that this has been occurring, what has that structural deficit led to? What could Canada of today have been had we tackled these problems several decades ago? What does that mean to people's overall health, their well-being and their ability to access services? This is the structural problem that is fundamental to our policy direction today.

• (1045)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Madam Speaker, one of the big watershed moments was in the mid-1990s when the federal government decided to cut services massively and pushed the burden of spending down onto provinces. Many of them then pushed it down onto municipalities, and ultimately it has landed on the shoulders of Canadians because we do not have the same level of funding of social infrastructure that we had over 30 years ago in Canada. If we look at the corporate tax rate, in the year 2000 the corporate tax rate was 28% and today it is 15%. If we look at the percentage of govern-

ment revenue that is paid by large corporations, that is down in proportion.

Conservatives and Liberals both said that they were going to cut corporate taxes and that it was going to allow business owners to invest in their businesses, it was going to raise productivity and it was going to generate a lot more economic activity than would holding the corporate tax rate where it was to be able to fund social services. However, a common complaint of Conservatives these days if we listen to them at committee, as well as private sector economists and a lot of people in the business sector, is that Canadian business investment is pathetic compared to our peers and our productivity is not keeping pace, because that money was never invested back into their businesses. It was shunted out into tax havens or paid out in dividends, which, frankly, are not taxed enough, and all sorts of other things.

Therefore, the promise of the big tax cuts for the fat cats never came home to roost. This is why we should change what we are doing instead of doing the same thing and hoping for different results.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, we have heard from many across the country that one of the ways to address the \$30 billion in corporate tax loopholes from last year alone is to put in place a minimum tax on reported profits; that is, the profits that some of the largest corporations in the country report to their shareholders. Canadians For Tax Fairness estimates that this could recoup \$11 billion of that \$30 billion every year. The governing party chose not to do that in budget 2023. Could my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona share more about that?

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Madam Speaker, we absolutely need to be engaging in the enterprise of trying to ensure that this tax revenue is not lost, to go out of the country or to go to people who already own and control 40% of Canada's wealth as part of that small 1%.

I have a private member's bill requiring that if people want to benefit from the tax advantages of these tax treaties that Liberal and Conservative governments have put in place over the years, they have to have some economic substance to their business. Right now, what counts as a business is just a business number and a small mailbox somewhere in Barbados. Requiring that business to actually have something like a manufacturing facility or a desk and a computer with somebody hired to do some work seems like a pretty bare-minimum requirement for any legitimate business.

There is what my colleague suggested, and then there are some other ideas about how we can ensure that people are not just paying a lawyer somewhere else to set up a fake company in order to get massive tax benefits.

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Centre.

It is a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill C-42, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts.

Bill C-42 amends the CBSA to require Corporations Canada to make public certain information regarding those with significant control or ownership of federally regulated private corporations in Canada, creating a national registry of these individuals. In this case, “significant control” is defined as someone owning or controlling at least 25% of the corporation's shares. The bill will also better protect whistle-blowers, add new offences and give Corporations Canada additional inquiry, data validation and information-sharing powers.

The government has stated that its goal with this bill is to protect Canadians against money laundering and terrorist financing, deter tax evasion and avoidance, and ensure that Canada is an attractive country in which to conduct business. The bill's title, while literal, does not speak to the good the bill would do to combat money laundering and criminal financial activity in our country. Because of this, the Conservatives support the bill in principle, with important amendments recognizing the sheer need for action on money laundering in Canada. I will talk about the amendments later. First of all, I need to outline just how serious financial crime is in Canada and, thus, speak to the need for this bill.

Money laundering in Canada is so well known in the world that criminals call it “snow-washing”. While it is a problem throughout the country, the worst of the issue is concentrated in British Columbia, especially in the Vancouver area. As stated in the Cullen commission's final report on the issue of money laundering in British Columbia, money laundering has, as its origin, crime that destroys communities. This includes drug trafficking, human trafficking and fraud. Such crimes victimize the most vulnerable members of society. Money laundering is also an affront to law-abiding citizens, who earn their money honestly and pay their fair share of the costs of living in a community. There can be few things more destructive to a community's sense of well-being than a governing regime that fails to resist those whose opportunities are unfairly gained at the expense of others.

Under the Liberal government, and going back into certain governments in the 1990s, Canada became a haven for money laundering. Specifically, in the nineties, the British Columbia provincial NDP government changed regulations that governed casinos. Five-dollar bets became \$500 bets at baccarat tables and private gambling salons, and the bets only grew from there.

The Cullen commission report indicates a stunning growth in cash transactions in B.C. casinos; first flagged by investigators in 2008, transactions continued unabated until at least 2014, when casinos accepted more than \$1.2 billion in cash transactions. Many of the transactions matched the indicators for criminal funds, where bricks or even duffle bags of cash were delivered to casinos. The commission indicated that these criminal transactions involved loan sharks delivering bundles of \$20 bills, which had been packaged in a way that was consistent with the proceeds of drug trafficking, to high-profile foreign gamblers. These gamblers had travelled pri-

marily to Canada to play baccarat in secluded areas of the casino. These high rollers often paid back the loan sharks the funds they gambled via transactions in their country of origin. In this evolution, B.C. gambling, real estate and luxury items became favourite tools of criminals to launder illicit foreign funds.

It is ironic that it is the Liberal government strengthening money-laundering bills. I am glad to see it, but if we look at the history even since I was elected, there was Joe Peschisolido, who was accused of money laundering. Then we had Raj Grewal, who asked questions about money laundering to FINTRAC at committee just before being arrested and charged with fraud. We also have another backbencher who is flipping real estate, even though we know that real estate is one of the key ways in which money laundering is happening. As I said, it is ironic that they are bringing this forward, but I certainly agree that we need to do something to rein in out-of-control money laundering.

The commission also found that, in B.C.'s economy, casinos, real estate dealings, banks and law offices face big money-laundering risks and that the failures of the federal RCMP and FINTRAC allowed money laundering to grow. The report indicated that FINTRAC's reporting regime is essentially wasteful and that the RCMP's lack of attention has allowed for the unchecked growth of money laundering since at least 2012.

● (1050)

The report states:

One of the primary criticisms of the federal regime is the ineffectiveness of FINTRAC.... While...there is a statutory threshold that must be met before FINTRAC can disclose information to law enforcement, the number of disclosures to law enforcement is [allegedly] not commensurate with the volume of reports that FINTRAC receives, nor with the scale of money laundering activity in British Columbia.

That is according to Cullen and his team. He suggests:

Law enforcement bodies in British Columbia cannot rely on FINTRAC to produce timely, useful intelligence about money laundering activity that they can put into action.

*Statements by Members*

It is true that FINTRAC receives an enormous volume of reports from public and private sector reporting entities, but it produces only a modest number of intelligence packages that actually go to law enforcement. For example, in 2019 to 2020, the Cullen commission found that FINTRAC received over 31 million individual reports. In that same year, it disclosed only 2,057 intelligence reports to law enforcement agencies across Canada and only 355 to law enforcement agencies in B.C.

Global News reporter Sam Cooper has been investigating dirty money in B.C. for years. He found that, as of 2016, fully half of the luxury properties in Vancouver were owned through suspicious circumstances. The Prime Minister has known about this for years. The global money-laundering watchdog warned the Prime Minister in 2016 that Canada was a safe haven for money laundering, particularly in our real estate market, and that a registry was needed to help identify and deter this activity. In fact, the watchdog gave the Liberal government a failing grade in five key areas because dirty money was able to slip into our businesses and real estate market undetected, with no questions asked. That was 2016, and it is now 2023; the legislation is pretty late in coming.

The Panama papers data leak in 2016 exposed that international criminals have long exploited the gaps in Canada's corporation beneficial ownership regulatory scheme to engage in corrupt conduct through federally, provincially and territorially administered corporations. Canada is generally perceived as having weak laws to combat money laundering and the proceeds of crime. As a result, in 2018, B.C. launched the expert panel on money laundering in real estate. The panel estimated that in B.C. alone, more than \$7 billion of dirty money was laundered in 2018 and between \$800 million and \$5.3 billion was laundered through the real estate market, raising housing prices by an estimated 5% on already wildly expensive properties.

The Cullen commission report demonstrates that money laundering within real estate often involves the use of loans, mortgages and, in some cases, lawyers' trust accounts in the legal system. It can also involve cash. The report provides this example: A criminal might take out a mortgage with the purchase of a property and repay the mortgage with the proceeds of crime. If the cash deposited for each payment is under \$10,000, it will not trigger the requirements for a large-transaction report to FINTRAC. Over time, criminals may accumulate multiple properties or higher-value real estate using this strategy. The properties can then be sold, often at a significant profit in the Vancouver real estate market, with the criminal property owner receiving clean funds from the purchaser to complete the money-laundering process.

Law-abiding Canadians across the country have been suffering as a result of this issue. Since the Trudeau government was elected, the price of a home in Canada has—

• (1055)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I would remind members not to use the first or last names of MPs in the House.

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, I apologize.

The price of a home under the Liberals has doubled, and many Canadians have entirely given up on the dream of home ownership. Most young people now believe that owning a home is unachievable. Even if the money-laundering problem is adequately combated by the passing of this bill, it is years too late. Therefore, it is not enough to stop the snow-washing in our housing market that is escalating costs for Canadians.

I have concerns about the bill; not only does it exclude real estate in the scope, even though we know that this is a major place for money laundering to happen, but it also covers only federally regulated businesses. Many business owners are provincially regulated, so if the provinces do not come on board, then there are many ways that this could slip through the cracks.

In terms of amendments, Conservatives would like to see amendments to protect privacy rights in the registry. We also want the registry to achieve the government's stated goal and have the capacity to do so. Will the bill give law enforcement enough necessary tools to capably combat money laundering and terrorist financing?

Conservatives have some recommendations. The new and existing penalties for violating reporting requirements under the CBCA should be strengthened, corporations should be held accountable as individuals, and if the act is violated, there needs to be clarification on who can and cannot be exempted from the regulations.

This bill is a critical update to our laws, and I look forward to seeing it at committee, where we can make amendments to improve the bill and eliminate money laundering in Canada.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

### NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, today marks the National Day of Mourning for workers killed, injured or made ill by workplace conditions and hazards.

In 2021, over 1,000 workplace deaths were reported in Canada, with 18 of them being young people from communities across the country. We must put health and safety at the forefront of all jobs to prevent further work-related injuries and loss of life.

*Statements by Members*

To start, we know a unionized job is a safer job. Collective bargaining and the right to strike are fundamental rights. These rights are central to our democracy and have resulted in improved working conditions for all workers. I would encourage all my colleagues to read and press for the recommendations of the Canadian Labour Congress to ensure every worker in Canada is safe.

While we pause today to honour and remember each life tragically cut short, let us also continue to push for better.

\* \* \*

**JIM HOWLETT**

**Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Jim Howlett, who, after a brief battle with cancer, passed away on April 9 of this year. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family: his wife Carol; their children and partners, Jessi and Keith, Katie and Vlad, and Aaron and Stephanie; their grandchild, Evan; and his close family friend, and honorary mother, Lydia Cartlidge.

Jim dedicated nearly 30 years of his life serving as a volunteer on local boards and committees, including 17 years at the Hamilton Conservation Authority, and up until the time of his passing, as a board member of the Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority. He was an environmental pioneer, advocating for a clean airshed, clean soil in Hamilton's industrial lands and clean water in Hamilton harbour. He pushed all levels of government to make the environment a priority in his neighbourhood, and much of the progress we have witnessed in and around Hamilton harbour can be attributed to Jim's efforts.

Most important to me, Jim Howlett was my friend, and I am going to miss our conversations about all things Hamilton. His passing is an incredible loss for the beach community, the city of Hamilton and our country. He will be sorely missed.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**SENIORS IN PORTNEUF—JACQUES-CARTIER**

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Madam Speaker, as the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, I have the pleasure of regularly meeting with the seniors in my riding. Every time I meet with them, I can only admire how strongly they feel about being community builders.

I would like to thank our presidents: Lynda Lavoie-Leclerc from Cap-Santé; Jacqueline Gignac from Deschambault-Grondines; Micheline Côté from Donnacona; Ghislaine Lepage-Alain from Lac-Beauport; Micheline Bernier from Neuville; Yves Laroche from Pont-Rouge; Sylvie Lefebvre from Portneuf; Robert Julien from Saint-Alban; Carole Dolbec from Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures; Martine Germain from Saint-Basile-de-Portneuf; Michel Després from Sainte-Brigitte-de-Laval; Étienne Dusablon from Saint-Casimir; France Laprise from Sainte-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier; Gaétane Martel from Sainte-Christine-d'Auvergne; Raymond Groleau from Saint-Gilbert; Denyse Julien from Saint-Léonard-de-Portneuf; Louise Barette from Saint-Marc-des-Carières; Yvon Marcotte from Saint-Raymond; Marie-France Delisle from Saint-Ubalde; Shirley Kiley from Shan-

non; Gaétane St-Laurent from Stoneham; and Édith Boivin, who will be meeting with me this Saturday in Rivière-à-Pierre.

I simply want to give them my thanks.

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[*English*]

**ENERGY INDUSTRY IN CANADA**

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, because we are a major energy producer, the global shift to net zero presents both a challenge and an opportunity for Canada. More than \$100 trillion in private capital is projected to be spent between now and 2050 to build the global clean economy. We must capitalize on Canada's competitive advantages, including our skilled and diverse workforce, abundant supplies of critical minerals and metals, clean energy, and the technologies needed to power the global clean economy.

We also have uranium and are developing small modular nuclear reactors. We must attract investment for extraction, processing and recycling of the critical minerals essential for clean technology supply chains. We must take a team Canada approach and work collaboratively with provinces and indigenous communities to fast-track projects' implementation and realize our full potential.

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING**

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Speaker, for over 40 years, unions, families and communities have observed the National Day of Mourning to recognize all of those who have tragically lost their lives on the job, such as my dad, who left us when I was just 12 years old. He was killed on a work site in northern Alberta, where his employer recklessly failed to supply a safe work environment. To all those families like my own, I see them, I am with them, and together we will ensure that no more lives are lost.

In particular, I want to recognize the many single parents who were left shocked by the sudden workplace death of their partners and were forced to parent alone, like my mom did. To her and so many like her, I thank them for always being there for us.

Finally, I want to thank all of those who have shown kindness to the families who have lost their loved ones. It is because of their support that so many of us are able to stand to continue to fight for workers' justice today. It is the deepest of solidarity, and I will never forget that support.

To anyone who has time to spend with families and victims of workplace deaths at gatherings across Canada today, I thank them. It means the world to us.

*Statements by Members*

• (1105)

[Translation]

**AUTISM MONTH**

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, April is Autism Month and I am rising at the end of this month to speak on behalf of Canadians on the autism spectrum because this community wants to be heard and deserves to be heard.

Before I became an MP, I was a teacher. Before that, I was a special education teacher for people with specific needs and I helped autistic students integrate into “neurotypical” classrooms.

[English]

This is a community that needs to be given some additional tools to thrive. Currently, there is a lack of support. Additional funding is required to provide students with autism special education teachers, child care workers and behaviour analysts, to name a few.

When it comes to autism, early intervention is key. Families of children with autism need access to therapies that have been proven to significantly improve outcomes, such as speech language pathology, occupational therapy and applied behavioural analysis, which are too expensive for the average family to afford. These kids deserve that early intervention, and together, I know we can do better to make Canada a more inclusive place for all.

\* \* \*

**FREEDOMS IN CANADA**

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker,

The Charter of Freedoms and Rights  
Is now in a whole bunch of fights  
From Religion to Speech  
Libs extended their reach  
And the courtrooms are full of their plights

Let us start with the censorship bills  
C-11 and 18 are the pills  
That restrict what we see  
And take down if they don't agree  
Against all Canadians' wills

And then let's go on to the guns  
That sports shooters will use just for fun  
They'll put in a ban  
While the crooks to a man  
Will keep theirs while charges are none.

The privacy rights of us all  
Will be toast if their bill doesn't fall

C-27 won't aid  
Our European trade  
If it doesn't comply with their call

And this is the end of my rhyme  
Because I've just run out of time  
Or for sure there'd be more  
I could say on this score

Our rights I'll protect, they're sublime.

**CLOVERDALE RODEO AND COUNTRY FAIR**

**Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, following a three-year break due to COVID, I am excited the Cloverdale Rodeo will once again be taking place from May 19 to 22.

Established in 1888, this agricultural fair and exhibition is Canada's second-largest rodeo event. The Cloverdale Rodeo and Country Fair was created to encourage the development of agricultural resources in the Fraser Valley of B.C.

There will also be a variety of food vendors and a parade of over 1,000 participants, myself included. From marching bands to skateboarders, dance groups and clowns, there will be something for everyone to enjoy. Live musicians will play on stage as the surrounding community comes together to share in sport, art, song and dance.

I encourage both British Columbians and those outside the province to come experience our western hospitality. Join me in getting back to country and agriculture at the Cloverdale Rodeo this upcoming May long weekend.

\* \* \*

**HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN**

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of this House the situation of just one of many political prisoners in Iran, Mojahed Kourkour, who has been unjustly sentenced to death by the Iranian regime.

He was wrongfully convicted for the murder of a nine-year-old boy, despite the boy's parents having testified it was in fact state security officers who killed their son. Both parents were present when their son was shot, and the father was left paralyzed during the same incident.

Mojahed has been subject to severe torture in prison and was only recently allowed to call his family after several months.

The Iranian regime continues to harass and imprison women's rights activists who are protesting the killing of Jina Mahsa Amini and fighting for women, life and freedom. This is unacceptable.

I call on Iran to stop the imminent execution of Mojahed Kourkour, release all political prisoners and stop the executions.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SEVENTH EDITION OF ENFANTS D'COEUR'S FUNDRAISING DINNER**

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Madam Speaker, last Saturday was the seventh edition of the spaghetti dinner fundraiser in Montmagny.

*Statements by Members*

This charity event, organized by Enfants d'cœur, finally made a comeback after a forced three-year break. The evening was a resounding success. In total, 1,356 tickets were sold and over \$17,000 was raised.

The proceeds from the dinner will go towards supporting the foundation's primary mission, which is to support projects that encourage youth to adopt healthy lifestyle habits by participating in sports.

I want to sincerely congratulate and thank Francis Fréchette and Frédéric Ouelle, the founders of Enfants d'cœur, two men with big hearts. Thanks to their dedication and involvement, hundreds of young people will have the chance to grow up healthy.

I also want to thank all the volunteers who made sure that the event went smoothly and the partners who gave everyone the opportunity to enjoy a delicious dinner in good company. I am extremely proud of my riding's vitality and community spirit.

Long live Enfants d'cœur.

\* \* \*

● (1110)

[English]

**KAJANAN CHANDRASEKARAM**

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, last week, I called one of my favourite Canada summer jobs employers, Kajan "KJ" Chandrasekaram of Bliss Stations, to inform him that his budding company has been approved for the program. I was devastated to learn from his brother of the untimely passing of KJ on April 18 at the young age of 26.

In 2018, KJ founded Bliss Stations, a dessert company based in Scarborough—Rouge Park. His passion and determination turned Bliss Stations into a burgeoning force at major events in Scarborough and beyond. He persisted during the COVID-19 pandemic and came out stronger. KJ sought to expand his business this summer by providing 12 young people with their first summer jobs.

I am heartbroken by the loss of KJ because of his infectious spirit of entrepreneurship, determination and sheer hard work. A life of promise was cut short, but I am told that his family will continue to build his dream. I ask members to join me in extending our condolences to KJ's family, friends and his team at Bliss Stations.

\* \* \*

**DEBBIE SONBERG AJZENKOPF**

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, last weekend, I joined Rabbi Reuben Poupko for the Sabbath at Beth Israel Beth Aaron synagogue in Côte St. Luc in Montreal. I was saddened to learn there of the loss of a great local leader, Debbie Sonberg Ajzenkopf, who passed away recently.

What a rabbi is to the Torah, so was Debbie to everything in that synagogue. She knew who liked to sit where, who was ill, who was doing better, who was getting along with whom, and who was not getting along with whom. Debbie was literally the keeper of everything, of all the knowledge in the synagogue. From the tales of those there, I mean everything.

She was also a committed and passionate Jew, absolutely devoted to her faith and to her synagogue. Debbie embodied the prophet Isaiah's teachings, that each of us should give what we have decided in our heart to give, not reluctantly and under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Debbie was a cheerful giver of her time, and of her love for Judaism and Yahweh.

*Baruch dayan ha'emet.*

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING**

**Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in 1984, April 28 was established as the National Day of Mourning in Canada to remember and honour those who have died, been injured or suffered illness in the workplace. The Day of Mourning, also known as Workers' Memorial Day, is officially recognized in about 100 countries worldwide.

Today, on the National Day of Mourning, we remember and honour those who have lost their lives or been injured on the job. Every year, too many workers are injured or killed while simply trying to earn a living for themselves and their families. We must do everything in our power to ensure that every worker returns home safe at the end of the day.

This is the day to take a moment to reflect on the importance of workplace safety and commit ourselves to creating safer working environments for everyone. It is with great respect and also great sorrow that we remember those who have given their lives or their health to go to work. We realize that more must be done to protect them.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FESTIVITIES IN ORLÉANS**

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, on April 10, I attended the 15th awards gala of the Regroupement affaires femmes, where three women from Orléans were recognized for their leadership. I want to congratulate Lydia Marie Philippe, who received a "young leader" award; Hortense Mvuemba, who received the "community engagement" award; and Sabine Daniel, who was named "icon of the year".

[English]

It was also a pleasure to host an iftar reception with leaders of the Muslim community of Orléans on April 18, where we gathered to break fast. I would like to take this opportunity to wish *Eid Mubarak* to all, which was celebrated on April 21.

• (1115)

[Translation]

I was also very proud to join current and former students, staff members and teachers on April 20 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Béatrice-Desloges Catholic secondary school in Orléans and congratulate all the staff and employees for their devotion to education in French over the past 25 years.

Congratulations to them.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Speaker, today I want to bring the House's attention back to the horrible events that continue to unfold in Iran. Since the death of Mahsa Amini, the oppression from the Iranian regime has been relentless, and we must not look away.

Today, I am announcing that I am politically sponsoring Samaneh Asghari. She is a children's rights activist and industrial engineering student who has been unjustly sentenced to 18 years in prison. We, as members of Parliament, must continue to show the Iranian regime that we are watching, that we are looking at these individual cases. We need to push our Canadian government to do more.

Samaneh deserves her freedom. Iranians deserve their freedom, and they deserve to live in dignity with their human rights upheld. No one should ever be unjustly imprisoned, tortured, sexually assaulted or worse, murdered, for speaking out.

Today, and until she is released, I will use my public platform to call for justice and freedom for Samaneh and for all Iranians. Women, life, freedom.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, on February 21, ethics commissioner Mario Dion had to step down for health reasons after 43 years of public service, including the past five as Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Mr. Dion elevated the role and today I want to thank him for his excellent work. Throughout his tenure, Mr. Dion helped safeguard public trust, despite the many violations by government members that he had to contend with. He said, "I firmly believe that educating regulatees and the public about the importance of avoiding conflicts of interest serves to help restore Canadians' trust".

His successor faces an immense challenge. Mr. Dion can leave with his head held high. The Office of the Commissioner is a credible and trusted institution.

I will close by saying that this strategic position urgently needs to be filled by someone everyone can agree on, because without a commissioner, there can be no investigations, and that is just unacceptable.

#### Statements by Members

I want to thank Mr. Dion.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the first vacation the Prime Minister went on was to a billionaire's private island. He claimed he was a close personal friend. Was this not also his first ethics violation?

In 2021, on the first-ever National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, he and his family jetted off to Tofino for a surfing vacation.

This year, before going on vacation to a luxurious Jamaican resort, he received approval from the Ethics Commissioner. That luxurious Jamaican estate belonged to the wealthy Green family, which has made big donations to the Trudeau Foundation. The Prime Minister stated that Peter Green was a close personal friend. Wait. Was the billionaire not also a close personal friend? I guess it is different this time. After all, they are both rich donors to the Trudeau Foundation.

I am sure all Canadians agree that they cannot wait until the Prime Minister takes a permanent vacation from politics.

\* \* \*

#### NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

**Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, last week was National Volunteer Week and I want to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers for the hard work, dedication, commitment and difference they make in our communities. Too often we underestimate the hard work, long hours and free time the 24 million Canadian volunteers give to our communities.

The work of many organizations and associations would not be possible without the generous contributions of volunteers. I want to highlight some of them in my riding: the Sackville Rivers Association, Hope for Wildlife, VETS Canada, Freedom Kitchen & Closet, Sackawa, Cheema and the Orenda Canoe Club. They all play an important role in Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook. Our communities would not be the same without them.

Let us be grateful now and throughout the year for the hard work of our volunteers. I thank them very much.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES**

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, while inflation, interest rates and housing prices spiralled out of control, the Prime Minister took a vacation. While Canadians from coast to coast commemorated the first truth and reconciliation day, the Prime Minister took a vacation. While our airports and passport office line-ups were out of control, the Prime Minister took a vacation. Now, while we face the largest public sector strike in Canadian history, the Prime Minister; and I will let members figure out the next line. We know that the Prime Minister is not used to hard work, but can he at least pretend like he is trying?

● (1120)

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, let us look at the facts. Canada's inflation rate has either remained flat or decreased, now nine months in a row. At the same time, our economy has added, and wait for it, 865,000 full-time jobs with 35,000 in March alone. While the Conservatives lack the confidence to invest in our country, Canadians know that the investments we are making are going to put this country on a solid path to prosperity for generations to come.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, there they go again, telling Canadians that they have never had it so good. Do they really think that hard-working Canadians are that stupid? We have the highest inflation rate in 40 years. We have the highest interest rates in a generation. We have the most expensive housing on record. That is not an answer.

Young people cannot buy homes, single mothers cannot buy food and workers cannot buy gas. The Prime Minister is not working and neither is his government. Does anyone over there really think Canadians will not notice?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I know the Conservatives do not like the facts. It is a problem when one is a Conservative and the truth gets in the way of a good story.

The reality is that we have had unemployment levels at 5%. We had 865,000 jobs created since the worst time of the pandemic. Our recovery is at 126%, which is faster than the United States. We have the fastest-growing economy in the G7. When it comes to that former government's record on poverty, we will take no lessons from the Conservatives. Over 700,000 people have been lifted out of poverty since we formed government.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the Liberals have made this mess and now they are trying to tell Canadians that they are going to be the ones who clean it up. All we hear from them is more spending, more taxes and more government: the very things that got us into this mess in the first place.

Crime is out of control in our biggest cities. There is a 32% increase. Young people cannot buy homes because the price has doubled under the Liberals' watch and groceries face double-digit inflation. The house is on fire and the Liberals are showing up with a flamethrower. Anybody who thinks this will work is indulging in

pure madness. Will the Liberals come to their senses and get out of the way?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Actually, Madam Speaker, when the country was on fire, so to speak, because we were experiencing the biggest health and economic challenge in a generation because of the COVID pandemic, our government came with a fire extinguisher. We were there to support millions of Canadians, whether through the Canada emergency response benefit, whether through the Canada emergency business account or whether was through the Canada emergency wage subsidy. What about the millions of vaccines that we provided to Canadians and the additional support we provided to provinces and territories to get us through the pandemic?

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*[Translation]***LABOUR**

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Madam Speaker, while the Prime Minister is living large in New York with his jet-setting lifestyle, Canadians are being impacted by the ongoing public service strike.

In my riding, Ms. Hamel, a mother with a three-year-old, was planning a trip. Unfortunately, she did not receive the passport she needed in time, by a matter of hours. She wrote, "I cried, I asked to stay and wait, but I was thrown out without any empathy. They just kept a three-year-old from going on a family vacation".

That is the reality for Canadians.

When is the Prime Minister going to personally step up to the plate and resolve the current conflict? When is he going to sit down at the table and get to work?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question. Unfortunately, by law, passports are not considered essential.

I am being honest with Canadians in telling them that passport applications cannot be processed during the strike. However, we understand that this has an impact on the lives of Canadians. That is precisely why we are at the bargaining table with the union.

We want to resolve this strike quickly because it is having a real impact on Canadians.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Madam Speaker, that is precisely why it is time that the Prime Minister assumed his responsibilities as head of the government.

The government has been negotiating for 10 days and has nothing to show for it. It is time to change tactics, otherwise another 10 days will pass without any results.



Ms. Hamel is disgusted, discouraged, angry and sad. She wrote to me about her poor child who was so eager to go on a beach vacation.

For Ms. Hamel and for the thousands of Canadians who are currently suffering as a result of the strike, when will the Prime Minister sit down at the table and act like a prime minister?

• (1125)

**Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we are at the bargaining table with the Public Service Alliance of Canada. I can say that our goal is to resume normal operations as soon as possible. The government is committed to negotiating an agreement that is reasonable for public servants and fair for Canadians. I can say that the negotiators are still talking. The government is at the table, and we are negotiating in good faith.

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#### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, in Quebec, French is declining as the language spoken at work. French is declining as the language spoken at home. The proportion of people whose first official language learned is French is declining. In short, French is declining across Quebec.

However, the Liberals' official languages action plan invests hundreds of millions of dollars in promoting English in Quebec. The entire portion available for Quebec focuses on English. Can the Liberals explain how providing huge amounts of funding for English in Quebec will slow the decline of French?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will ask the Bloc Québécois to be more open-minded. It is quite possible to defend French, and defend it vigorously, without attacking, offending, intimidating and criticizing the anglophone community. Whether we are anglophone or francophone, we are all Quebecers.

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I do not need lessons from anyone when it comes to being open-minded.

We heard a real gem from the Minister of Official Languages yesterday. She said her action plan does not provide funding for English, it provides funding for the vitality of Quebec's English-speaking community. That changes everything.

Nearly 30% of people mainly use English at work in Montreal. Meanwhile, the use of French as a main language has dropped by 13% in the communications sector and by 11% in the finance sector. In short, the vitality of the English language seems to be doing just fine.

Why are the Liberals investing in English when we keep reminding them that French is the language that is at risk?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we are investing in many ways to strengthen French. We are investing in our official languages plan and we are investing in culture, more specifically in television production, literature and elsewhere.

#### Oral Questions

That being said, I repeat that the Bloc Québécois should be a bit more open-minded and stop trying to pit anglophones and francophones against each other. I would like them to understand something once and for all: Whether anglophone or francophone, we are all Quebecers.

\* \* \*

#### LABOUR

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Madam Speaker, we are all aware of the Prime Minister's irrepressible and nearly pathological desire to rub elbows with the rich and famous, but now is not the time for champagne and selfies with Hollywood actors.

This is day 10 of the biggest strike in Canada's history. Some 150,000 people, mostly women, are in the streets standing up for their working conditions and their purchasing power. Is the Prime Minister so out of touch that he does not understand that these workers are fighting just to avoid getting poorer?

**Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, as I just said, we are still at the bargaining table. The Canadian government is negotiating in good faith. The unions are also still at the table. I know full well that this is important. We recognize that it is important for public servants to provide services. We need to give them a salary that is fair, but also find a solution that is fair for Canadians.

[English]

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Speaker, today, as we mark the National Day of Mourning, we remember all those killed or injured on the job.

It has been over 20 years since the Westray act was passed. It provides a legal framework for workplace health and safety, and it imposes serious penalties on unsafe workplaces. However, the Liberals have refused to properly educate law enforcement or take steps to enforce it. It is shameful for all workers who continue to be put in dangerous situations.

Why does the government continue to ignore workers who deserve protections on the job? Will it enforce the Westray act?

• (1130)

**Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I wish to pass on my sympathies to the member. I heard his S. O. 31 about his father's passing while on the job. One worker's death is too many workers' deaths.

Workers have the right to refuse unsafe work if they feel their life, health or safety is at risk. Employers have the duty and responsibility to protect the health and safety of workers. They are encouraged to seek guidance from the appropriate channels, including the Public Health Agency of Canada, industry associations and the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. They must do this. Protecting lives and preventing illness are a top priority.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it takes a special kind of incompetence to ramp up federal spending on the public service by over 50% and end up with the largest public service sector strike in Canadian history. The Liberals are spending \$22 billion more on employees and wages but taxpayers are receiving fewer services, in some cases no services, from government workers.

When will the Liberal government get its employees back to work and protect Canadian taxpayers from more debt and high taxes?

**Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, first of all, it is really important to state that both parties are at the negotiating table. The federal government is negotiating in good faith.

I know that my receding hairline might give an indication that I am a little bit long in the tooth, but I have a bit of a memory and I do remember when those on the other side of the aisle were in government. What did they do every time workers tried to have a collective agreement? They legislated them back to work.

We believe in having a negotiated settlement that is fair for workers and reasonable for Canadians.

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the largest public strike is happening not because of the Conservatives. We delivered on our promises. We did not have a general strike of federal workers while we were balancing the books and cutting taxes for families and businesses. We were able to manage the federal government and keep delivering services to Canadians. The Liberals had two years to come to an agreement with the public service. Now 150,000 workers are out on strike.

Again, when will the Prime Minister and the government get back to work?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the only thing the Conservatives did when they were in government was that they balanced the books on the backs of Canadians. They did nothing when it came to helping Canadians get out of poverty. In contrast, what we have done is help lift 450,000 children and a total of 2.7 million Canadians out of poverty. At the height of the COVID crisis, do members know what we did? We were there for every single Canadian, whether through wage supports or through services.

**Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the Liberals could not organize a birthday party. We have seen it time and time again with inflation, passports, airports, cost of living and housing. Now there is the largest public service strike in history, despite increasing spending on the bureaucracy by \$21 billion. There is no planning ahead. There is no leadership and no respect for taxpayers.

Canadians just want their government back to work. Why is it that the Liberal government never knows where the puck is going?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from that side of the aisle. Did members see what happened when President Biden was in the House? When the president spoke about

women, they cowered. When the president spoke about unions, they would not even stand up. Not only do they not respect collective bargaining, but they ran a government that had economic stagnation for nine years.

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I am going to get the hon. minister to restart his answer and hopefully there will not be any interruptions this time.

The hon. minister.

• (1135)

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault:** Madam Speaker, we should roll the clip back to when President Biden was in the House and the Conservatives would not stand up when he talked about a gender-balanced cabinet. The Conservatives would not stand up when he talked about union rights. The Conservatives do not believe in collective bargaining; we do. We are going to get a deal that is fair for Canadians, a deal that is fair for the federal public servants. Why do they not like the fact that we have more public servants? I cannot say, but the public servants helped us get through the pandemic. The Conservatives do not like it; Canadians do.

We are going to get a good deal.

**Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Canadians are getting their lunch eaten and being told it is good for them. Under the Liberals, everything is broken. Canadians are being denied basic government services once again, because of the largest public service strike in history. It is said that Nero played the fiddle while Rome burned. The Prime Minister is now doing the same, but, knowing him, he is playing dress-up.

When will he fix the mess that he made?

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, Canadians deserve elected representatives who come to Ottawa with solutions, not just cheap shots and slogans. Triple-triple is a coffee order at Tim Hortons, not a policy solution. It is not a valuable contribution to the debate in the House. However, budget 2023 invests in solutions like dental care for uninsured families, investments in mental health and more doctors and nurses to reduce wait times and make sure that Canadians can get the procedures and the surgeries that they need.

When will the Conservatives propose some solutions instead of just these childish slogans? We need some solutions, everyone. That is what Canadians need.

*Oral Questions*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we will propose solutions when we form government.

In Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, schools in Shannon and Valcartier are closed and parents are having to take time off work because traffic is being disrupted. Canadian citizens have unanswered questions about their tax returns. There are delays in issuing passports to young people who have invested all their savings in their year-end trip, and families will lose thousands of dollars without those passports.

The government is solely responsible for this strike. Where is the Prime Minister when it is time to negotiate, find a solution and get the country out of this crisis?

**Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, as I have said many times, we are still at the bargaining table with the union. We are there to negotiate in good faith. I am confident that when the parties are there and decide to negotiate in good faith, we will come to a solution.

There are certainly situations where we want to avoid doing what the Conservatives do: Whenever there is a problem, they always blame the public servants.

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I think my colleague has missed the point of what we have been saying for the last 10 days.

The bureaucracy has increased by 50% in terms of costs paid by Canadian taxpayers, who are receiving fewer services. Now 155,000 Canadian public service workers are on strike. It is the largest strike in Canadian history.

This government's inaction over the past two years is what created this dispute.

When will the Prime Minister come back and fix this problem?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the point my hon. colleague has missed is that this increased spending was to serve Canadians during the pandemic.

I know the Conservatives have forgotten that there was a pandemic that sent big shock waves through the economy and the health care system, but our government was there for Canadians during the pandemic. We made sure they received income supports, and we were there for Canadian organizations.

We will continue to respect the bargaining process with the union.

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**DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, at this point, the ties between the Prime Minister and the Trudeau Foundation are clear. His family, his friends and his staff are involved, as we heard in committee this morning.

The ties between the Chinese government and the foundation are also clear after a \$140,000 donation was made. The Trudeau Foundation is a collection of Liberal Party friends, and that is why it is of interest to China. All Quebeckers understand this.

One question remains: Who can trust anyone from the foundation to investigate Beijing's attempts to get close to Liberal circles?

• (1140)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, where I agree with the member is that it is very clear. The Prime Minister has had no direct or indirect contact with the Trudeau Foundation for over 10 years now. That is well established and is very clear.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, Ottawa must clamp down.

This was the warning given last week by Raphaël Glucksmann, chair of the special committee on foreign interference in Europe, who stated that what made it possible for these repeated attacks to take place was first and foremost the absence of sanctions, adding that there were no sanctions in the European Union.

That is why the Bloc Québécois is calling for three things: first, an independent public inquiry; second, an independent and permanent investigative body; and, third, a criminal law on foreign interference to equip police services. No one will settle for an already-discredited report by the Trudeau Foundation.

When will the Prime Minister realize that?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my colleague from the Bloc Québécois knows full well that our government strengthened legislation to deal with foreign interference in our democratic institutions. He knows full well that we have taken several measures—which were definitely not in place when we formed the government in 2015—to strengthen our institutions and to counter foreign interference, which had already been a factor for 10 years.

The good news is that we are continually working to strengthen our measures. We look forward to reading Mr. Johnston's recommendations on this issue.

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Madam Speaker, by using the Trudeau Foundation, a Beijing influence operation was successful. For \$140,000, Beijing had access to the Prime Minister and to the man the Prime Minister picked to investigate and report on foreign interference in our elections. What did that report say? It said there was nothing to see.

Is \$140,000 the cost to influence our democracy under the Liberals?

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, let us talk about bending the truth. The reality is very simple: At the end of the day, the Prime Minister has had no direct or indirect contact with the foundation for over 10 years now. The member knows that.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the Liberals are unreal. They are the only ones who think that “arm’s-length” means literally holding a meeting at arm’s length from the Prime Minister’s desk. They allowed Beijing to directly interfere in our elections and gave direct access to the Prime Minister and the person who is supposed to investigate interference in our elections. It is unbelievable. It is frankly not credible. Conservatives have called for hearings to occur on this, and we have invited, because he asked in the newspapers, Mr. Alexandre Trudeau to appear at committee to answer questions.

The Prime Minister’s brother is going to answer questions. The board that is falling apart is answering questions. When will the Liberals finally give Canadians answers?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, again, the member is very much aware that standing committees get the opportunity to call the witnesses they choose to call, and we respect that.

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Trudeau Foundation donors paid for the Prime Minister’s luxurious \$80,000 Caribbean vacation. The Prime Minister’s brother signed off on a \$140,000 Beijing bribe to the foundation to buy his influence, and the foundation held a meeting with five deputy ministers in none other than the Prime Minister’s own office.

The Prime Minister claims he has nothing to do with the Trudeau Foundation. Is it really so?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, yes, it really is. I do not know how much clearer I can be on this issue. The Prime Minister has very much indicated that there has been no direct or indirect contact with the Trudeau Foundation. The member knows that, and it has not taken place for over 10 years now.

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, there is more. The Prime Minister appointed the former president of the Trudeau Foundation to whitewash Beijing’s interference in the 2021 election. It was interference to help him get re-elected. Convenient appointments, paid vacations, meetings in his office and Beijing bribes all connect the Prime Minister to the Trudeau Foundation.

When will the Prime Minister and the government stop insulting the intelligence of Canadians and admit that the Prime Minister is closely connected to the foundation that bears his family name?

• (1145)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to tell the member that tinfoil hats are on sale on Amazon. I have been very clear on the issue. The Prime Minis-

ter has not had direct or indirect contact with the foundation for well over 10 years.

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**LABOUR**

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, while the Prime Minister is schmoozing with billionaires and bankers and taking selfies with Hollywood stars, 155,000 civil servant workers are on day 10 of their strike. In Winnipeg, 9,000 workers are on the streets, waiting on the Prime Minister to deliver a fair wage to keep up with inflation. The Prime Minister’s lack of attention is, quite frankly, disrespectful.

When will the Prime Minister get to the negotiation table to deliver the fair deal that workers deserve?

**Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, let me make this perfectly clear: The negotiators for the federal government are at the table, and they are negotiating in good faith. The negotiators for the unions are at the table, and they are negotiating. The best deal to happen is at the negotiating table, and if they work together, I am confident they will come to an agreement.

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**IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Madam Speaker, migrant workers in the care economy are essential. They deserve respect and they deserve to stay here if they choose to. They take care of our aging parents, grandparents and loved ones. The Liberals must grant permanent residency for migrant workers and their families so that they have the same protections and rights as any Canadian worker.

When will the Minister of Immigration grant permanent residency for migrant workers in Canada?

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her question and for her advocacy for caregivers in our country. As a former social worker, I know caregivers’ hardship. I have also worked with caregivers in many of my roles before entering politics.

We have announced that we are reducing work requirements from 24 months to 12 months to help reduce the barriers in getting PR. We sincerely value the sacrifice of our caregivers. We will always try to help people.

## LABOUR

**Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, today is the National Day of Mourning when we remember those who have died on the job and commit to safer and more respectful workplaces for all. A safe workplace is a fundamental right of every Canadian worker. One death in the workplace is one too many.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour tell us what our government is doing to help ensure workplaces are safe for Canada's workers on this National Day of Mourning?

**Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Sudbury for continuing to support workers. Every worker in Canada has the right to a safe and healthy workplace and the right to return home safely at the end of their workday. On the National Day of Mourning, we pay tribute to all workers who have lost their lives, been injured or fallen ill at work.

As we pause to reflect, we also see April 28 as a call to continued action. As we honour the memory of those lives lost, we are rededicating ourselves to creating and fostering workplaces where all workers can do their best work knowing that they are physically and mentally safe. One accident or one death on the job is one too many.

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## DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we know that, for years, Beijing has attempted to exert undue influence in Canada, but this is the very first government and the very first Prime Minister that have willingly offered Beijing cash for access. This is the first government that has gone that far, and \$140,000 is all that it takes. It might as well be 30 pieces of silver.

Why does the Prime Minister believe that our democracy is up for sale?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is somewhat unfortunate that the Conservatives want to continue with partisan attacks and character assassinations when there are so many different issues that Canadians are facing today.

One of the budget announcements that I am very proud of and feel that Canadians are glad to see is the grocery rebate. That is putting money in the pockets of Canadians, and somewhere to the tune of 11 million people will benefit from it. I think the Conservatives need to get in touch with what Canadians are concerned about.

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• (1150)

## PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Madam Speaker, they say that if someone does not learn from history, they are doomed to repeat it. We would think that the Liberals would learn a lesson or two with their many failed firearms policies, but here we are. Rather than focusing on the violent criminals

## Oral Questions

who are causing havoc in our streets, they would rather implement a buyback program from our law-abiding retailers.

Why will the Prime Minister not get back to work and focus on criminals, rather than lawful citizens?

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, combatting crime is a complex issue. Rather than offering solutions, the party opposite wants to come up with catchy slogans and obstruct the policies we are putting forward.

We need to be dealing with mental health. We are providing options when it comes to housing. We are very proud of Bill C-21 and the things that are being put in there to get a handgun freeze and additional penalties on organized crime. We are taking an overall approach to dealing with crime, and I am proud of what we are doing.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Madam Speaker, this is classic for Liberals. They do not want the facts to get in the way of a good virtue signal. The facts are that under the previous Conservative government, violent crime was down 20%. Under the Liberal government, violent crime is up 32%, and serious, gang-related crime is up 98%. The Prime Minister would rather go on vacation than make sure that violent criminals stay in jail.

When will the Prime Minister take a permanent vacation so that Conservatives can fix what he broke?

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, today the Minister of Public Safety is actually meeting with Secretary Mayorkas and Attorney General Garland from the United States at a cross-border crime forum. This is because we recognize that this issue transcends borders. That is why we have invested in the borders, something the Conservatives voted against. That is why we have invested in law enforcement. It is why we have invested in communities, so that community programs can be put in place to divert kids from gangs. We are taking an overall policy position on this, and I am proud of where we are.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Canadians in our big cities are feeling less and less safe on the streets and when taking public transportation. The Prime Minister's soft-on-crime policies are to blame. Violent offenders are back out on the streets the same day they are arrested and others are serving their sentence from the comfort of their living room instead of in prison.

Will the Prime Minister and his government finally get back to work so that violent criminals are punished and victims are protected?

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, Canadians deserve to feel safe and to be safe.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Canadians deserve to feel and be safe. All governments have a role to play in this. We will not solve this problem with empty slogans and misinformation. We need to work together.

In March, the Minister of Justice met with provincial and territorial counterparts to address the problem of violent repeat offenders. After a very productive FPT, we agreed that our government would table legislation, and we look forward to working with all parties to get to the right solution on this.

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*[Translation]***SPORT**

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, Ottawa has reinstated Hockey Canada's funding, but nothing has been solved with regard to sexual misconduct in sport. The minister decided to make a deal without an appropriate inquiry and without even waiting for the findings of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. The testimony heard at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage again this week would leave no one indifferent, except, perhaps outwardly, the Minister of Sport. For one year, she has done nothing to reassure young athletes or even the victims of abuse. Almost everyone believes that there will not be a change in sport culture without an independent public commission of inquiry.

When will the minister finally take action and launch this inquiry?

• (1155)

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, first, I want to salute the courage of all those who testified at the Council on the Status of Women and the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Out of respect for these individuals who told their stories, which was very difficult, we must all continue to work together in a non-partisan manner.

I have already stated that we will conduct audits and an inquiry to ensure that we make good decisions and that our children and athletes across Canada in community sports and on our national teams are protected. In a few weeks, we will be announcing good things for our sport system.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the victims of misconduct are not reassured. Many have testified that they do not have confidence in the current process at the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, which routinely dismisses two-thirds of complaints. Unfortunately, Hockey Canada's redemption—whether genuine or not—does not help gymnasts, skiers, water polo players, soccer players, fencers, boxers, and others. The entire sports culture needs to change. The House of Commons has already unanimously called for an independent public inquiry. Again this week, many victims were speaking out.

When will the minister do something?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we are all on the same side. We agree that the Canadian sport system needs to improve and that self-regulation of sport federations needs to end.

We are currently working with both the victims and the organizations involved to put the best processes and mechanisms in place. We will ensure that our organizations do a better job of protecting children and athletes and that there are robust remedies and recourse when abuse or mistreatment occur.

We are committed, and we will get the job done.

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*[English]***HOUSING**

**Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC):** Madam Speaker, after eight years under the Prime Minister, Canadians cannot afford a place to live. What do the Liberals have to show for the \$90 billion they have committed to housing? Mortgages have doubled. Rents have doubled. It is \$2,500 a month for a couple to rent one room in a townhouse. That is not the townhouse, just the room. A government on autopilot cannot fix a housing crisis.

When will this jet-setting Prime Minister and his government get back to work?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we recognize the challenges faced by Canadians in order to be able to afford a place to call home. We have put together a national housing strategy, which includes the Canada housing benefit. This goes directly into the pockets of vulnerable renters so that they can pay the rent. In addition to that, we have topped it up with a one-time \$500 top-up to the Canada housing benefit. The Canada housing benefit continues to exist in every province and territory. Unfortunately, the Conservatives voted against it, but we continue to make sure that each and every Canadian has a safe and affordable place to call home.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, for those in the middle class and those working hard to join it, it has been eight years of these Liberals, and things have never been more unaffordable. Despite committing \$90 billion to housing, people cannot find a place to live. The average rent and mortgage have doubled, and home prices have skyrocketed. It costs \$2,500 a month for a couple to rent one room in a townhouse. That is not the townhouse, just the room.

When will the government get back to work and let small businesses build the homes that Canadians need?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is really difficult to take the party opposite seriously on housing. That member has been on record saying that the federal government needs to do less on housing and that we should just download everything to the provinces and walk away. That kind of thinking is what led his leader to suggest that people should embrace cryptocurrency in order to opt out of inflation. That kind of thinking is what underpins the Conservatives' logic that if we walk away, magically, everything will work out somehow. That is not the kind of leadership that we need. The Conservatives need to get serious about housing, and they need to support our investments to support vulnerable Canadians.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I feel as though I am living in a dystopian fantasyland, as outlined in the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and hearing doublespeak. For everything the minister says, we should assume the opposite is the truth.

The reality, in this country, is that self-employment is dropping off a statistical cliff and, as a result, fewer homes are being built. Therefore, I will ask this again: When will the government get back to work and let small businesses build the homes that middle-class Canadians need?

• (1200)

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, here they go again, saying to let the private sector figure it out, to let the federal government walk away and to not invest anything in housing. Somehow, magically, everything will make sense. It is the same kind of thinking that led his leader to suggest that, magically, people can opt out of inflation by embracing cryptocurrency. That is not a plan.

What is a plan is the national housing strategy, which is investing in every spectrum of housing to make sure that Canadians have access to a safe and affordable place to call home. The hon. member talks about housing supply. With respect to the housing accelerator fund, he voted against it.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TOURISM INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, this is National Tourism Week.

The tourism sector is a vital part of the economy of British Columbia and indeed Canada. It has been hit hard in recent years.

Can the Minister of Tourism tell the House what the government is doing for this sector, which is so vital to the economy?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vancouver Granville for his question and for his hard work.

Our government is committed to ensuring that the tourism industry continues to grow and prosper. That is why we celebrate National Tourism Week every year. We invested \$158 million in budget 2023 to ensure that Canadian and indigenous partners in this sector achieve that goal.

I would like to thank all our partners and workers in this sector who are at the heart of the industry and who work every day to make Canada the best destination in the world.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CARBON PRICING**

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Canadians should look out. The Prime Minister wants to tax their gas off. His plan, which will triple the carbon tax, will make it unaffordable for Canadians to drive to work or heat their homes. It is nothing more than a tax plan. His plan has failed to meet any emissions reduction targets, so now he is going to make them pay more. Meanwhile, he is taking vacations, burning taxpayers' gas.

Will the PM stop saving his own gas and cancel his plan to triple the carbon tax?

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, as much as the Conservatives would like to deny it, climate change is real. What else is real? Those cheques that are arriving in people's mailboxes beginning April 14. In my home province of Manitoba, people will receive \$250 a quarter, over \$1,000 a month.

What is not real? Some of the conspiracy theories that are purported by the other side and cryptocurrency. I would not invest in cryptocurrency. It is a really bad thing to do.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Canadians continue to struggle due to the soaring costs of fuel for their cars, homes and groceries. People on fixed incomes cannot absorb the rising costs and they do not have the opportunity to realize additional wages. The government is crippling Canadians financially and to suggest that the carbon tax rebate covers the additional tax is absolutely nonsense.

Will the Prime Minister cancel the plan to triple the carbon tax?

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there is good news for Canadians. Starting April 14, those cheques began arriving in people's mailboxes. In Alberta, they will receive \$1,500 per year, and that is over \$350 a quarter. It will be \$1,000 in Manitoba. Eight out of 10 families will be better off. Those cheques, as I mentioned, will arrive quarterly. That is going to help with cash flow. That is going to help with affordability. The Conservatives do not seem to be interested in either.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The Olymel meat-packing plan in Vallée-Jonction, in my riding, which employs 1,000 workers, announced that it will be permanently closing its doors in December 2023.

This closure will have a major impact on the pork industry in both Quebec and Ontario. Fully 70% of the pork produced in Canada is exported. However, the minister has not commented on this at all since the announcement was made two weeks ago.

What will the minister do to help the workers and especially the farmers who will be directly affected by the closure of the processing plant?

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. As he knows, the minister is in Japan defending the interests of Canadian agriculture. He must be well aware of that, because he is the one who moved the motion to have the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food hear from the various stakeholders in the coming days. The Government of Quebec has committed to working with Olymel.

Obviously, Olymel made a business decision and has not yet contacted us about what the solution will be, but, of course, we are prepared to work with the industry to defend the interests of farmers and workers.

• (1205)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I would like to remind the member that he cannot refer to who is present or absent. Also, since I heard a phone ringing, I would ask members to put their phones on silent mode and to keep them away from the microphone to help keep the interpreters safe.

The hon. member for Calgary Skyview.

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[English]

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, too many people are the victims of sexual violence. We know how important it is for police services to have access to important tools, like the national sex offender registry, to investigate and prevent sexual violence. We also know going through the criminal justice system process can be hard for victims.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister of Justice tell us more about the new bill we introduced to protect Canadians against sexual violence and empower victims?

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Calgary Skyview for his hard work in his community.

We just introduced Bill S-12 in the Senate. It would strengthen the national sex offender registry by requiring all offenders to regis-

ter, unless they can prove that they do not pose a risk to public safety. Bill S-12 would also give victims more of a say in whether a publication ban is ordered and gives survivors a clearer pathway to modify or revoke a ban. Some victims want to protect their identity, others want to tell their stories. It should be their choice.

We look forward to the support of all of our colleagues in the House and Senate to ensure that Bill S-12 is passed quickly.

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**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the Port Renfrew Chamber of Commerce and sport fishers in my community are really frustrated. Starting July 15, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will close a prime chinook fishing spot off the coast of southwest Vancouver Island without doing sufficient consultation with locals or first nations. These hard-working people rely on this fishing spot to earn their income and support their families. Why is the minister yet again ignoring coastal communities and their expertise?

**Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, in fact, if we look across the country, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has put a special emphasis on working with coastal communities and looking at a rural development strategy plan. Whether it is focusing on small craft harbours, working on indigenous knowledge, or working with fishers to put in place programs that help fishers, help communities and help generate community wealth, that is what this side is about. However, I take the member's question to heart and will bring it back to the minister and get back to him in due course.

\* \* \*

**YOUTH**

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Madam Speaker, the Canada summer jobs program is not only a financial lifeline for non-profits, charities and small businesses, but it is a critical support for young people looking to get their start in the workforce. This year the program has been cut by over 50%. That is \$60 million less than even prepandemic levels. It means that small organizations in my community, from CAFKA to Red Raccoon Bike Rescue, are reeling.

Does the federal government understand that these drastic cuts have real impacts on essential community organizations across the country?



**Ms. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I know many of us in this House cherish what this program does on the ground in our communities for youth. I would say to my colleague that MP input on this program is vital to its success. Our on-the-ground understanding as MPs of what is needed in our communities is really important to its success and to youth. While the number of positions in some of our youth programs in CSJ have recovered back to prepandemic levels, we will keep providing opportunities to youth for youth employment across the country.

\* \* \*

• (1210)

[Translation]

#### NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I understand that there have been discussions among representatives of all parties in the House and that there is agreement to mark the National Day of Mourning and honour the memory of workers who were killed or injured at work.

[English]

I now invite hon. members to rise for a moment of silence.

[A moment of silence observed]

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### PETITIONS

#### AIR TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, today, I am pleased to table a petition on behalf of Punjabi Canadians across Canada who are calling on the government to establish direct flights between a Canadian international airport and Amritsar in the Punjab.

We have over one million Canadians of Punjabi descent. It makes economic sense. It is good for business. It is good for culture. Let us get it done.

#### HAZARAS

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, as I have done before, I am tabling a petition on behalf of constituents of mine who are calling on the Government of Canada to again recognize the ongoing genocide of the Hazara Shia minority in Afghanistan by the Taliban regime. They are also calling upon the Government of Canada to ensure that Hazara Shia minority groups are included in the 40,000 Afghan refugees to be resettled in Canada by end of year.

#### ESSENTIAL WORKERS

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, this is a very important petition that relates to our essential workers and the important work that they do, especially in light of what we saw during COVID-19, when we saw frontline health care workers

### Routine Proceedings

working so hard, day in and day out, as essential workers, protecting the lives of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

What we have seen, though, afterward are wage freezes that have been put on these essential workers, especially in Ontario, under Premier Ford's government, where their hard work is not being recognized.

What this petition is asking for is to take action, in order to prevent wage freezes and cuts on essential workers, to increase funding and to improve the quality of essential services, to prevent the privatization and to take action against the profiteering of our essential services and health care services and, most importantly, also to support provinces in improving the quality of Canada's health care system.

I very much agree with this petition and endorse and present this to the House.

#### RCMP DEPOT

**Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity today to present a petition on behalf of the people of Regina and southern Saskatchewan regarding the RCMP depot in Regina.

While the report by the Mass Casualty Commission had many good recommendations, the recommendation to shut down the RCMP depot in Regina is a non-starter for the signers of this petition. The RCMP depot in Regina is a world-class police training facility and any required changes to police training should be done in the existing facility instead of shutting it down.

The history of the RCMP in Regina is also a very important part of the local economy and culture.

I am pleased to be able to present this petition today here in the House of Commons.

• (1215)

#### AIR TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there has been incredible growth of our Indo-Canadian community across the country. In Manitoba, there has been all sorts of growth that has created a significant demand for more international travel opportunities.

The people who have signed this petition are asking for the federal government and different airline carriers to seriously consider establishing a direct flight that would go from Winnipeg International Airport to an airport in India or, at the very least, in Europe.

It is something that is in need and that is what it is that my constituents are arguing and asking for.

\* \* \*

### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

*Government Orders*

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is my honour today to rise in the House to talk about Bill C-42. “Money laundering” is the short description. Canadians would be surprised to know that, aside from the soft reputation our country has on the international scene, Canada is increasingly known as a popular safe haven for criminals to launder and hide their money.

In 2022, Canada ranked 14th on Transparency International's corruption perceptions index, with a score of 74 out of 100. Canadians would be in their right minds to ask why our country's score is not higher, especially since this problem with lack of transparency has been known for a long time, for the past seven years, to be exact.

People will remember that, in 2016, the Panama papers leak exposed the fact that international criminals had been exploiting the gaps in Canada's corporate beneficial ownership regulatory scheme to engage in corrupt conduct through federally, provincially and territorially administered corporations.

That same year, the Financial Action Task Force, which acts as the world's international money-laundering watchdog, warned Canada that it was being used as a safe haven for money laundering and that a registry was needed to help identify and crack down on this activity. However, since then, under the current government, Canada has been slow to act, and when it did, it failed to go far enough. It took until 2018 for the Liberal government to begin introducing requirements to increase transparency around who exerts significant control over corporations and assets in this country. In 2021, the Financial Action Task Force indicated that Canada had made improvements but remained only partially compliant in five areas and wholly non-compliant in one. Laundered money was still able to find its way into our country with no questions asked.

Now, here we are in 2023, introducing measures that are long overdue to tackle a problem that should have been dealt with years ago by the government. Unfortunately for Canadians, while the Liberals were in no hurry to tackle the issue of money laundering throughout all those years, it has had a very real and devastating impact on a sector of our economy that affects everyone, one that keeps being mentioned extensively as of late. I am referring to the housing market.

Since the government took office, the price of a home in Canada has doubled, leaving citizens across the country to give up on the dream of home ownership. The situation is dire: Seven in 10 Cana-

dians now believe owning a home is financially reserved for those who are wealthy. Part of this phenomenon of housing growing increasingly out of reach for Canadians is explained by criminals using real estate as a vehicle to launder their money in Canada. This is enabled by the fact that Canada's anti-money-laundering compliance regime is itself least compliant with international standards, when it comes to supervising real estate agents and identifying the buyers of property. For young Canadians looking to start a home and a family, this pushes prices up and puts their dreams of home ownership farther out of reach. Why is this? It is partly because they have to compete against criminals who wish to use real estate to hide their dirty money. It is supply and demand.

The situation is especially problematic in British Columbia. In 2018, the province launched the expert panel on money laundering in real estate. That panel estimated that, in B.C. alone, more than \$7 billion in dirty money was laundered across the economy in 2018, and that up to \$5.3 billion of that money was laundered through the real estate market, raising housing prices by an estimated 5%. It is no secret that housing is exceptionally unaffordable in cities like Vancouver, and criminal activity plays a non-negligible part in aggravating the situation.

The situation is so dire that the number of British Columbians moving to Alberta reached a 20-year high in 2021-22, and for most, the main reason was affordability. Alberta is proud of its strong economy. It is one that welcomes Canadians from across the country with open arms and offers opportunity and affordability to its citizens. However, due to the Liberals' weak approach to money laundering in Canada, the problem that plagued British Columbians is now following them across the Rocky Mountains. Calgary, the city I represent here in Parliament, is now also being used as a hub for the criminal network of money-laundering groups that has grown across Canada under the current government.

● (1220)

I knocked on a lot of doors during elections in Calgary Centre, and I knock on doors between elections. When I go into the large condos that have recently been developed, sometimes I will find a condo where half of the units are empty. Nobody lives there, yet they are all sold. There has been a lot of construction in Calgary, with a lot of vacant suites, yet there is no one living in these buildings. It is quite clear that it was foreign owners who bought those properties. Whether it is legitimate foreign ownership because people are actually moving their money out of where they live and want to make sure they have some safety elsewhere, or whether it is connected with the criminal element that has also increased the illicit activity of drug addiction in Calgary, is another question entirely. It is a mix between the two. That is something we need to address here, going forward.

My constituents are particularly concerned about it because of the effects it has across society, not just on the housing market; housing is only one part of the problem. The broader issue at hand is the fundamental question of who owns what in this country. Are Canadian assets held by hard-working and law-abiding Canadians or by criminals using them as a means to engage in offshore money laundering? As someone who worked in the financial industry for decades, I understand the importance of transparency and accountability, two things that are currently lacking when it comes to the ownership of assets in this country.

In last year's budget, the government committed to finally implementing a national public registry by the end of 2023, ahead of the previously committed year, 2025, but this acceleration of the timeline in the Liberal agenda was not prompted by the housing affordability crisis and its heart-wrenching impact on Canadians. Rather, it was the public concern about the misuse of nominee and corporate ownership by Russian oligarchs that led to the acceleration of this timeline.

That is why I support this bill, but I also believe that it should be more ambitious in its reach right now, as opposed to when the next international crisis forces the government to act. The fact remains that we are perceived internationally as having weak laws to combat money laundering and the proceeds of crime. Our Five Eyes partners see us as a laggard on corporate transparency. This is why Conservatives not only support the additional measures being introduced by Bill C-42 but also call on the government to do a number of things.

I will interject here and talk about my experience. I acted in the financial industry for years. I actually represented a number of investors who had their money laundered through a bunch of different vehicles. That was a manipulation of the legal process by several parties involved. This happens all the time in Canada. The laws are set out now. I know that since 9/11 in 2001, the government tried to get more transparency through the legal mechanisms, the legal profession, to try to make sure they disclosed when they had transactions of \$10,000 or more coming into their accounts. That was overturned by the Supreme Court of Canada in 2015. It ruled that, in fact, lawyers had the right to withhold that information from governments. What I have seen personally is that those lawyers give good advice on how to launder money through accounts in Canada, whether it is offshore accounts or whether it is Canadian "quasi-criminals". It is hard to call them criminals until they have actually been convicted. That is the direct experience I have had.

There are things we need to do. Of course, we need to change the offences outlined in the bill and the existing offences under the Canada Business Corporations Act from summary convictions to Criminal Code offences, which would then rank money laundering on par with the most serious offences under the Criminal Code in Canada, as it should be. We also need to change the threshold for significant interest at which disclosure is required, from 25% control of shares to 10%. That is a threshold already used by the Ontario Securities Commission for public disclosure requirements. Reducing the currently suggested threshold would further reduce the ability of criminals to hide their activities.

We need to clarify the degree of back-end access to the registry of law enforcement, in relation to the proceeds of crime and money

### *Government Orders*

laundering. Under the bill right now, in its current form, law enforcement, as well as the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre, or FINTRAC, would require an affidavit to access all of the information contained in the registry.

• (1225)

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was fascinated to hear the hon. member talk about some of the transactions between lawyers, because we know that transactions between lawyers' trust accounts are not captured by FINTRAC. Is he strongly in favour of changing that?

The other thing I would ask him to comment on is the beneficial ownership of broadcast outlets in Canada, because there are concerns about Chinese meddling. We have heard, at least anecdotally, that their control over radio and television and cable stations, if it is not ownership, is certainly something else. Is that also worth a closer look in connection with this bill?

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I will not address the Broadcasting Act, because I am not sure that should be covered here or should be covered in a different bill, but I will address what the member talked about regarding lawyers' trust accounts. Lawyers' trust accounts are not held to the same standard as financial transactions. I remember that, in the financial industry, if \$10,000 in cash came into one's account, one had to report that to FINTRAC authorities immediately. If one was at a brokerage, \$1,000 of cash was actually the hurdle. Money laundering actually happens at places like currency exchanges, where people walk in with a thousand bucks and will exchange \$999 and effectively do it that way. We do need to include the trust from lawyers in here. We will watch them fight it again in the Supreme Court, but making sure we bring them under the umbrella of what is acceptable for money-laundering mechanisms in Canada is very important.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very interesting speech. I think we share rather similar points of view on this bill.

His colleague from Sarnia—Lambton, who spoke before he did, brought up the Panama Papers scandal in her speech to illustrate the fact that the government is not doing enough.

I would like to remind the House of some of the figures from that scandal. While the government brags about how much it is doing, the Canada Revenue Agency has recovered less money than Revenu Québec has. By way of comparison, the United Kingdom recovered more than \$317 million; Germany, \$246 million; Spain, \$209 million; France, \$179 million; Australia, \$173 million and Canada, \$21 million. That is 10 times less than the others.

Does my colleague agree that the government needs to be doing a lot more?

*Government Orders*

• (1230)

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his good question.

He is right. The CRA's weakness internationally is appalling. Every other country in the world says that it has recovered more "dirty money", as it is called, from the money laundering that is done in countries like Panama.

I am sure that the Canada Revenue Agency should be producing better results.

[*English*]

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member on the need to combat money laundering and tax evasion. On the disclosure norms, I think he mentioned the threshold of 10%. He seems to agree with that. My concern is this. Why should we have any threshold of any percentage before the names of the shareholders are made public? It is very easy to work around this owner threshold.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Mr. Speaker, we should have a beneficial owner threshold that actually says who controls these companies. A lot of them will be in separate nominated accounts that might have the same person behind them, but eventually we need to see our way to who those people are. As my colleague is, I think, alluding to, if there are 11 people owning 9% of a corporation, none of those has a full 10%. In that case, the beneficial ownership should be quite clear that it is the same entities that control that corporation. He is right; we should capture making sure we are talking about beneficial ownership of at least 10% or more. There comes a point in time when one is just a passive investor, but at 10%, one is actually a participant, in my opinion.

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Richmond Hill.

I rise to speak to Bill C-42, which would implement a public and searchable beneficial ownership registry of corporations governed under the Canada Business Corporations Act.

We have an issue with money laundering and terrorist financing. To deal with this, we need tools and mechanisms in Canada that are in line with international best practices. Creating a public and searchable registry would increase the transparency of beneficial owners of federally regulated Canadian corporations, which would increase corporate accountability and improve public trust in corporate institutions.

These measures would help protect Canadians against money laundering and terrorist financing, deter tax evasion and tax avoidance, and make sure Canada remains an attractive place to conduct business.

I will take a moment to mention what corporations are. Corporations exist basically to allow individuals to channel their capital for the benefit of making profits. The corporation, as we know, came into existence in the 1844 act in Britain, and the shareholders were granted limited liabilities in 1855. In 1866, the United States court declared that a corporation is a natural person. Basically, while the corporation channels the resources for investment in a commercial enterprise, it limits the liability of the person to the capital contributed.

I will quote from an article published in *New Internationalist*:

What is a corporation? Ambrose Bierce's *Devil's Dictionary* defines it as "an ingenious device for obtaining profit without individual responsibility". It is a legal construct, a charter granted by the state to a group of investors to gather private funds for a specific purpose. Originally, charters were granted in the service of a public purpose, and could be revoked if this were not fulfilled. The relationship between state and corporation is a complex one. Over the past 400 years corporations have conquered territory and brought in resources for the state, breaking laws put in place to constrain them and gaining in power and privilege. History shows a repetitive cycle of corporations over-reaching, causing such social turmoil that the state is forced to rein them back in through regulation.

Now, corporations are being created for no other purpose than to evade or avoid taxes. Supreme courts around the world have ruled on the difference between tax avoidance and tax evasion, and mentioned that if there is any transaction followed by an individual or a corporation that does not have any impact or consequence other than to reduce or eliminate tax, the transaction can be declared null and void.

We need to take all steps to rein back and plug the loopholes that are exploited by individuals and corporations to avoid or evade paying their fair share of taxes.

In budget 2022, we committed to implementing a public and searchable registry of beneficial ownership information. The registry would cover corporations governed under the Canada Business Corporations Act and would be scalable to allow access to the beneficial ownership data held by provinces and territories that agree to participate. The objective of the registry is to provide relevant authorities with timely access to accurate and up-to-date information about the true controlling individuals of corporations in order to combat illegal activities, including money laundering, corruption and tax evasion.

• (1235)

Greater transparency would also improve corporate accountability more generally and thus help protect the public, improve trust in corporate institutions and ensure a well-functioning marketplace. As it currently stands, corporations are already obligated to compile some beneficial ownership information. Upon the entering into force of this new piece of legislation, corporations would need to collect additional information from their beneficial owners, like citizenship and residential address, and send the information in their register of individuals with significant control to Corporations Canada on an annual basis and within 15 days of the day on which a change is recorded in their register.

*Government Orders*

There are a couple of shortcomings in the current bill, which can be overcome. One is with respect to fully publicly disclosing the names and citizenship of shareholders or members of corporations. The fundamental question is this: Why should the public not be aware of who is investing in a corporation, including their citizenship being known? It is not the fundamental right of any individual that he or she can be a shareholder. It is a privilege offered by the state through various acts, so why should the public not be aware of individuals who are shareholders, including their citizenship?

I do understand the need for their privacy of information like the address of the shareholder, which is something that has been addressed, but there is no reason why the names and citizenship of the shareholders of any corporation should be kept from becoming public. Especially, we Canadians should be aware of foreign nationals investing in Canadian corporations; disclosing their citizenship is a must.

There is another solution, which is that the information may be disclosed only if a threshold of ownership is significant and exceeds a certain mark. For significant shareholding, the threshold is 25% in some jurisdictions and 10% in other jurisdictions. However, using a threshold to limit disclosure requirements creates a loophole that can easily be exploited. If the threshold is fixed at 25%, five people could form a corporation with 20% each or 11 people could form a corporation if the threshold is 10%.

On the positive side, through this bill, we have sought to limit administrative burden by leveraging existing intake and reporting mechanisms that federal corporations are already familiar with. For example, federal corporations are already required to update Corporations Canada within 15 days after a change of directors occurs and to file an annual return.

We have carefully considered domestic and international best practices in developing the proposed beneficial ownership registry regime, including the U.K. system. We also made sure the proposed model would meet and exceed the standards for beneficial ownership transparency maintained by the Financial Action Task Force, a global anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism financing body of which Canada is a founding member.

In closing, I want to reiterate that this is a good bill that is very much required. We have to bring Canadian standards in line with international best practices. However, there are certain shortcomings, which I think should and must be addressed at the committee stage. I am sure that with the co-operation of all parties in this House, this bill will get passed and will become legislation sooner rather than later.

• (1240)

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Nepean raised two areas of amendment: on disclosure of information, such as citizenship, and on the significant interest threshold, which members on our side have raised during the debate today as well.

I would like the member's opinion about whether the Liberal Party is open to further amendments on the penalties for corporations and individuals. In some cases, penalties in the legislation go up to \$200,000, but are as low as \$5,000 in other cases for corpora-

tions. Would the member opposite be open to further amendments to ensure that people who seek to launder money in Canada and have a registered corporation at the federal level would be accountable to higher penalties?

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Mr. Speaker, first on the question of disclosure of information, my understanding is that the bill does disclose citizenship and other details to various law enforcement agencies. However, my view is that citizenship information must be available to the public, too.

On the question of imposing penalties, personally I am in favour of changing the penalties if they are too lenient. We have to make it worthwhile. Penalties for the people who break the law should be sufficiently high to cause at least some pain.

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**BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023, NO. 1**

BILL C-47—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. 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-47, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28.

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.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to start by commenting on the time allocation that was just imposed on us.

I just want to remind my colleagues in the House that the Standing Committee on Finance is already doing a pre-study of Bill C-47. It is progressing very well. Work is moving forward. We are sitting until midnight. This allows my colleagues who want to speak to Bill C-47 to do so. There was no need for the government to impose time allocation. This infringes on the rights of members of Parliament in the House. It is shameful.

What does my hon. colleague think of this?

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mike Morrice):** I will remind members that there is a lot of latitude in debate, but we are meant to be speaking to Bill C-42 at this time.

That being said, I will allow the hon. member for Nepean to respond.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, obviously the question is not part of Bill C-42 that we are debating.

I would like to take this opportunity to solicit the support of the Bloc Québécois to pass this important legislation that we are debating today.

• (1245)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on the issue of money laundering, the impact on housing has been significant. In fact, in British Columbia, it has been indicated that it has contributed to inflating the cost of housing as much as 5%.

With this piece of legislation, could the member advise whether or not it would be effective in addressing the issue particularly on the land registry perspective?

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Mr. Speaker, I am not aware that the land registry can be dealt with in this bill. I am not particularly sure, but I do agree with the sentiment expressed by the hon. member on the impact of corporations investing in real estate and driving up the prices unnaturally, causing a hardship for Canadians in owning a property.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government has been demonstrating very strong leadership by bringing forward the legislation. We get a sense of the support for the legislation and hope to see it pass. There is an obligation, if I can put it that way, for other jurisdictions in Canada, the provinces, in particular, to step up at the same time.

Ottawa is more than happy to assist in working with them where it is needed, but it is important that other jurisdictions also take action of sorts. I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on the importance of that.

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague brought up a very important consideration. The nature of the Canadian system is that corporations can be set up under provincial jurisdiction. They do have certain limits on various things, like the threshold for disclosure of ownership. Through this bill, we have provided for the reporting mechanism to be streamlined, working with the provinces. On the other aspects of the bill, I hope that the provinces will step up and work with the federal government to have a uniform system in place in Canada.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to address the chamber on Bill C-42, which would amend the Canada Business Corporation Act, or CBCA, and make consequential changes to other statutes.

We are here to discuss this proposed legislation because a lack of beneficial ownership transparency is impairing Canada's ability to combat serious financial crimes, such as fraud, money laundering and tax evasion. It also limits our capacity to enforce domestic and international sanctions and to effectively trace and freeze financial assets. Finally, it is impacting the trust of Canadians and foreign investors in our marketplace.

Our inability to quickly and quietly identify a company's beneficial owner delays criminal investigations; denies law enforcement leads to potential suspects, witnesses and evidence; and impairs the

identification and seizure of suspected proceeds of crime. It also reduces the ability of private businesses to protect themselves.

Bad actors have long used corporate vehicles to obscure the ownership and control of assets to the detriment of Canadians' and other's confidence in private businesses. A public beneficiary ownership registry would complement the existing tools of law enforcement, while facilitating the identification of changes of ownership without the risk of alerting the suspects of an ongoing investigation. In turn, this would help prevent the dissipation of criminal assets subject to investigation or freezing orders.

The need for this type of registry has, by now, been well established, notably by public consultation held by the Government of Canada in 2020, as well as the Commission of Inquiry Into Money Laundering in British Columbia more recently. Such registries have, moreover, existed in the United Kingdom and many countries since 2016 and have proven a useful tool in deterring misuse of corporations for illicit financial activity by law enforcement, journalists and civil society.

In 2018, for example, Transparency International found that the then Czech prime minister was the sole beneficiary of two trust funds owning shares of a Czech conglomerate in receipt of EU subsidies. In a significant conflict of interest, Slovakia's public registry showed that the prime minister remained the ultimate owner of these trusts.

In 2019, the department responsible for the U.K. registry, the world pioneer, published a review of lessons learned so far. All law enforcement organizations the department spoke to had used the registry to inform criminal investigation, with most reporting using it at least weekly and noting the positive effect it had on their work. According to other resources, the U.K. registry was accessed more than two billion times a year.

More recently, the OpenLux investigation by journalists who had compiled and analyzed data from the Luxembourg's public beneficial ownership registry uncovered politically exposed persons, criminal organizations, an arms dealer and oligarchs linked to Luxembourg companies.

A beneficial ownership registry would also serve tax authorities here and abroad, who would be able to use the information to track and fix tax evasion and aggressive avoidance. The Panama papers, as well as other mass leaks, have shown that private players look for places with weak beneficial ownership transparency and then layer ownership of corporate entities across those jurisdictions to obscure personal ownership interests and income. The longer the chain of entities between the income and the beneficial owners, the harder the truth is to ascertain.

We should not underestimate the significant burden tax evasion and avoidance have on the Canadian economy. More generally, placing beneficial ownership information in an accessible registry would provide criminal and civil intelligence value, helping law enforcement and regulators stay abreast of evolving fraud cases, trends and ways corporations may facilitate these trends.

• (1250)

This awareness supports actionable intelligence to generate investigative leads. Certain government authorities may also have a bona fide interest in identifying the beneficial owner of the corporations they do business with, licence or oversee.

Making beneficial ownership information publicly available further supports good governance and trust. All businesses can check who they are doing business with by reviewing the registry of potential suppliers and customers, and businesses regulated for anti-money laundering purposes can consult the registry to support their due diligence.

Registries and the transparency they foster further serve as a deterrent to illicit actors. When reporting and disclosure requirements are tightened against a particular sector, product or service, prospective criminals will shift their tactics to find alternative ways of laundering funds. By depriving owners of their anonymity, registries will make Canada a less desirable jurisdiction to commit financial crime, forcing them to use more risky criminal vehicles or to go somewhere else entirely.

All in all, it is clear that the registry proposed by the bill would significantly improve Canada's ability to fight financial crime. It would help public authorities verify owners across corporate layers, help businesses better validate the identity of their trading partners, fight money laundering, fight tax aversion, and render more difficult the use of corporations for illicit activities. I hope all members of the House will join us in supporting the passage of this bill.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his very interesting speech. We obviously agree on Bill C-42. With regard to the fight against tax havens, my colleague talked about the Panama papers scandal. Does he agree with me that, despite all the money that has been invested and all the laws that are in place to give us the power to intervene, Canada is still lagging behind other countries on this?

The Canada Revenue Agency recovered less money than Revenu Québec. Let us compare the numbers. The United Kingdom recovered \$317 million, Germany recovered \$246 million, Spain recovered \$209 million, France recovered \$179 million, Australia recovered \$173 million, and Canada recovered \$21 million. Is that acceptable?

• (1255)

[*English*]

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Madam Speaker, naturally it is not that simple. However, all those tools that exist are still open to us, and we are hoping this bill will further strengthen the regime we have and allow us to increase our vigilance over those types of illicit activities.

### *Government Orders*

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, one of the concerns I have with the bill is the ability of law enforcement agencies in Canada to use the information in a correct way to go after money launderers and those who would be committing crimes under the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act.

I was pleased to see that the member for Richmond Hill referenced the Cullen commission in British Columbia. I wonder if the Liberals would be open to exploring at committee stage further clarifications as to the power of law enforcement to use this tool to get to the root of the criminals who are undertaking money laundering in Canada, denigrating our institutions, and as a result, Canadians losing faith in the ability of our law enforcement to combat these kinds of crimes.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Madam Speaker, we are looking forward to getting this bill to committee where we can explore all the opportunities available to us to further strengthen it. Any measures, tools, regulations or legislation that help our law enforcement officers to identify the criminals and people who are money laundering, using the values of the Canadian people in a very negative way, need to be addressed. They need to be empowered.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the issue around how money laundering is impacting real estate is very significant. In fact, a special panel did a review on this in British Columbia, and one of its top recommendations was to have a beneficial ownership of land registries across the country. B.C. did that, and I believe we need to do that, given the housing crisis we are faced with. The conservative estimate on the impacts of money laundering on real estate in British Columbia is at least a 5% hit with respect to the cost to housing.

I have previously asked this question. It appears the government members do not think this is incorporated into the bill. My question for the member is this: Does he feel this should be incorporated into the bill to ensure that we also tackle money laundering through real estate?

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Madam Speaker, indeed, we need to make sure that we tackle money laundering through real estate.

I believe that, if the real estate is purchased through corporations, the current bill would be able to assist, but I strongly suggest that we introduce a land registry with a clear indication of who the beneficiaries are, because that in itself is a tool to flip real estate and further assist in the laundering of money.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-42 today. I think it is very important for us to recognize that, as time goes by, we have had, very much, a heightened sense of awareness on such an important issue. If I reflect back to a number of years ago, very rarely would we hear about the types of situations that are being debated today inside the chamber.

We are very much aware of things, such as the Paradise papers and issues surrounding corporations, the issues surrounding money laundering and so many other issues. Canada and other countries around the world are looking at ways we can deal with the issue of beneficial ownership and the impact it is having. We are looking at a registry and trying to improve the system.

Listening to the many comments today from members across the way, and members within the Liberal caucus, we find that there seems to be fairly widespread support. Yes, I respect that opposition members and others do have questions about the legislation. I suspect that will be the opportunity, once we get into the committee stage, to look at what possibilities there might be to strengthen the legislation.

I have actually been encouraged by the debate thus far on the legislation. I have had the opportunity to ask a few questions, and I would like to be able to highlight a few concerns, in a broad way, that I have.

If I were to respond to the debate today, there are a couple of things that come up. In particular, the NDP made reference to the whole issue of tax fairness and lost revenues. I think that, if we were to canvass Canadians as a whole, we would find that Canadians do not mind paying their taxes, as long as there is a sense of fairness to it.

People want to pay or are prepared to pay their fair share. That is the reason why, if we take a look at it, over the last number of years, virtually since we have been in government, the government has taken a number of actions to build on the fact that Canadians' expectations are that we improve and make the system better for all. I do not know how many times I have had the opportunity to talk about some of the initial initiatives we have taken as a government.

I would like to start off from the particular point that, shortly after being elected, in recognizing Canada's middle class and supporting Canada's middle class, there were a number of tax initiatives taken, as well as actions by the government.

I would like to amplify a couple of those initiatives. The first one that comes to mind, of course, is the tax reduction legislation we brought forward at the beginning of the mandate for the middle class. It was a piece of legislation, very clear, to ensure there is a higher sense of tax fairness by enabling a break for the middle class.

At the same time, if we will recall, there was an additional tax that was put on Canada's wealthiest 1%. That is something we recognize is an issue in tax fairness. We have also seen other budgetary measures.

• (1300)

I mentioned the issue of tax avoidance and those individuals who go out of their way in order to pay their fair share of taxes. This is something that, I would suggest, we can look at through a lens of tax fairness. However, if we are going to be true to our word, we need to properly resource the CRA to go after those individuals, groups or corporations that are trying to avoid paying taxes in questionable ways.

There was a significant amount of money allocated to CRA over a couple of budgets. Prepandemic, we saw an additional investment of hundreds of millions of dollars. Do not quote me on this, but I believe if we were to combine the total investments that the federal government has put in supporting CRA in going after individuals or corporations trying to avoid paying their fair share of taxes, it is likely just over \$1 billion. The expectation for CRA is to look at ways to recover money from lost taxes.

The last time I looked, the number of records being looked at was well over 1,000. Pre-2015, it might have been fewer than 100. So we know that CRA is in fact much more proactive today than it has been in the past. Again, from my perspective, it is about looking at ways to ensure that there is a higher sense of tax fairness.

In the recent budget, we have a sense, in terms of taxes, with respect to banks and insurance companies where inappropriately high profits were taken. We have seen taxes being put onto those sectors in the most recent budgets, again, with the goal of ensuring that there is a higher sense of tax fairness.

The member for Elmwood—Transcona also made reference to the whole issue of corporate tax. I noticed that he tried to group the Liberals and the Conservatives together by saying that whether it was Liberals or Conservatives, we believe in giving corporate tax breaks. Yes, there have been corporate tax breaks. I am not one who believes in the trickle-down theory of corporate tax breaks personally, but I would suggest to the member that when the NDP has had the opportunity to govern, particularly in my home province of Manitoba when I was in opposition during NPD Premier Gary Doer's administration, there were corporate tax reductions. I think we have political parties of all stripes that have implemented corporate tax deductions. However, Canadians are very concerned when they hear of that, especially if they are having to pay their taxes when there are all sorts of inflationary demands.

So, if we take a look at the comments I just put on the record, there is a need for Bill C-42.

• (1305)

Bill C-42 is an attempt by the government to do a number of things. It is not only ensuring that there is tax fairness, but also a higher sense of transparency and accountability.

As has been pointed out, money laundering is a very serious issue in Canada, in some provinces more than others. It has caused a great deal of hardship. The best example is likely the one the member across the way mentioned in regard to housing.



We have speculators and people who want to launder money using housing as a tool. Not everyone who invests in housing in Canada is necessarily money laundering. I am not trying to say that, but we do know that money laundering does take place in our residential communities and in the development of condominiums.

The member made reference to Vancouver and British Columbia. We know it goes far beyond any one province. We can talk about what is taking place in Toronto and find that there is laundering and speculation. That does drive up the cost of housing.

With the budgetary measures that we have taken in the past and the budget implementation bills in the past, we have tried to put in some restrictions in order to prevent that foreign ownership, or even put a tax on individuals who are not living in or a resident of Canada, with the idea of having a fairer share of taxation.

The issue with respect to the transparency and accountability of corporations really does kick in here. At the end of the day, when we look at the Canada Business Corporations Act, it is all about the modernization of that legislation to ensure there is a higher sense of corporate transparency and accountability.

From my perspective, if we take a look at the primary tool, we are going to have a registry that is open and public, and quite searchable for ownership information or beneficial ownership. By doing that, I believe there will be a huge difference.

If we look at what the Canada Business Corporations Act does, it enables certificates of compliance, as an example. If a corporation is not in compliance with the legislation, we would have a tool that would ensure that the corporation might not get that certificate. That can have a profound impact on the corporation itself. Without that certificate of compliance, it would have difficulties with things such as loans and suppliers.

At the end of the day, I believe the passage of this, and the establishment of a public, searchable beneficial ownership registry, would ensure there is a lot less money not taken into account, so less money laundering and less money being used in illegitimate forms. For me, that is something we need to recognize within the legislation.

• (1310)

The government has been committed to a robust and effective regime to combat money laundering and terrorist financing to improve the public trust in our corporations. It does not take much for a corporation to fall on the wrong side of the whole issue of money laundering and the impact it has on the corporate community. A vast majority of our corporations are in fact good entities that contribute in many different ways. It is not just jobs. It is all forms of opportunities, community development and so forth. Because of the bad apples that are out there, it does leave a negative stain.

Therefore, when we talk about the legislation trying to minimize issues like money laundering and improving accountability and transparency, a vast majority of corporate stakeholders do not have any problem with this. The consultation that has taken place goes back to 2020, going right into 2022 where there was a great deal of consultation with different stakeholders and interest groups. There were even foreign consultations with other nations.

### *Government Orders*

We want to make sure that we get it right. We appreciate the privacy issues and that has been raised here. With respect to what had taken place in Europe, there was a court decision in regard to the issue of privacy, so we do want to tread carefully on that particular issue. However, it is absolutely critical that we continue to see the legislation move forward because it would make a difference.

There are some provinces that have actually gone further than other provinces. Quebec has passed its legislation and I believe it has been implemented. I am not 100% sure of that. Because in a federal system we have to take into consideration that there are jurisdictional issues, we have to be aware that some provinces still need to do a whole lot more than other provinces. Therefore, taking a pan-Canadian approach to looking at best practices and looking at the legislation that we are bringing forward today would go a long way in ensuring that not only those federally regulated corporations that are registered through the Canada Business Corporations Act but also those in provincial and territorial jurisdictions will have that obligation of ensuring that there is more transparency and accountability.

In looking at the legislation and listening to the comments, I believe I have a fair reflection in terms of many of the comments that were said earlier today. I would encourage members to view the legislation in part in terms of the commitment that has been made to try to get this passed before the end of this year, which is faster than we had initially indicated. However, in order to do that, we look to opposition parties to follow through on some of the words that they have stated today in terms of that tentative principled support that they are providing and allow the legislation to go to committee. I would think that would be a positive thing, given that all parties seem to support the principle of the legislation.

Therefore, I would encourage members to take the issues, as I know they have, of money laundering and of ensuring more accountability and transparency within a very important sector, in the name of making sure that there is a higher sense of tax fairness. Again, that, to me, is what it is all rooted in. Canadians do not mind paying their fair share of taxes and it is very upsetting when they hear of the money laundering that takes place, or of individuals or corporations wanting to get off the hook for paying their fair share of taxes.

• (1315)

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, overall, as the member for Winnipeg North summarized, we have been having a pretty comprehensive debate on Bill C-42. There have been suggested amendments from each party, with broad unanimity that we need to take further action to combat money laundering in Canada and its impact on the housing market. I was particularly pleased that a number of members on all sides raised the Cullen commission and the impact crimes are having, especially on British Columbia.

The future public beneficial registry will be a tool to combat the use of illicit funds in our economy. Is the Liberal Party open to providing further clarification as to the extent of the power of law enforcement to use it? What other tools can we give our law enforcement agencies to make sure that money laundering is finally combatted in the way Canadians expect us to do?

*Government Orders*

• (1320)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I recognize that the member of Parliament represents an area in British Columbia. Nowhere in Canada have we seen the issue of money laundering raised and brought to our attention more than in British Columbia. It has been raised through the media, showing the complexities of the problems resulting from money laundering. There are very strong criminal and tax avoidance elements to it. It is an issue that is very upsetting for Canadians, because it is about tax fairness. Canadians expect that the government is going to do what it can in order to resolve the issues. I say that pre-emptively to indicate to the member that it is really important for Ottawa to continue to work with the Province of British Columbia and look at joint ways in which we can deal with that very serious issue.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his speech.

My colleague from Joliette mentioned, in a question posed a little earlier, that Revenu Québec had done a much better job than the CRA on tax evasion by recouping significant amounts, which was one of the arguments used by the Bloc Québécois to justify giving Quebec full taxation powers by implementing a single tax return.

I would like my colleague to comment on the idea that this bill will make it even easier for Quebec to recoup even more money hidden in tax havens by tax evaders, providing further justification for giving Quebec full authority over its tax returns.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I do not think it is in Canada's best interest to have each province create its own collection agencies. We would have 10 or 12 different ones: Revenue Quebec, Revenue Manitoba, Revenue Alberta and so forth. I would be concerned.

Once it was provided the additional financial resources during the pandemic, the CRA demonstrated how successful it can be. There have been well over a thousand investigations. CRA is well equipped to ensure that Canadians from coast to coast to coast are well represented.

I am also concerned about those valuable CRA jobs in the province of Quebec. At the end of the day, people in Quebec and the rest of Canada are well served by the CRA. Once it is provided with the proper resources, it will be able to deal with a lot of the things we expect it to do. That is one of the reasons we funded it with just under \$1 billion to do so.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, if the member for Winnipeg North wants to see the bill proceed faster, maybe the government should not schedule it for Friday sittings. That is just my opinion.

There is an offence and punishment section in Bill C-42. It lists that corporations found guilty of an offence can be liable for a fine not exceeding \$5,000. The punishment for individuals can be as high as \$200,000. Of course, the whole purpose of this bill is to uncover individuals who may be using corporate entities to hide themselves.

That being said, does the hon. member think \$5,000 is a sufficient deterrent to prevent corporations from doing this, or would he see value in maybe increasing it to make it commensurate with the offence of the transgression?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, a number of things in the legislation would hopefully enable companies to abide by it and recognize that, at the end of the day, we will be able to deal with the issue in a much stronger way.

For example, in my comments, I made reference to the certificate of compliance. Often, in order to acquire financial support, a corporation or an individual needs to have a certificate of compliance. If it is not issued, this can have a profound impact on the corporation or the individual. Whether in fines or the certificate of compliance, a number of tools would enhance the opportunity for us to ultimately see more compliance within the legislation.

As I said, a big part of it, I believe, is going to depend on our justice system and the CRA and making sure that they are properly equipped. That is why I indicated earlier that it is great to see that not only are we bringing forward legislation, but, as we have demonstrated in the past, we are also providing substantial financial support for the CRA.

• (1325)

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, another question on where the government stands on possible amendments relates to the impact of significant interests. Under the legislation, only individuals with over a 25% interest in a corporation would be covered under the beneficial ownership registry before us today. Is the government open to making amendments to the law that would lower the threshold of significant interest?

Second, it has come up in debate today that there are questions about whether trusts will be covered under this beneficial ownership registry. Is the government open to examining the impact of trusts as they relate to money laundering as well?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, the government has indicated that it wants to get the bill to committee and has always been open to ideas that would ultimately make the legislation stronger for the betterment of Canadians.

I would suggest to the member that if he has some very specific amendments he would like to put forward, he does not necessarily have to wait until the bill gets to committee. Some ideas might flow out of committee presentations from witnesses, or the member might have his own personal ideas. I think of lawyer trusts, for example, which were mentioned earlier today, and how those trusts could possibly be incorporated, or something of that nature.

There are opportunities here, and I look forward to the legislation going to committee. I know the member has expressed a great deal of interest in this issue, and I wish him well in terms of working, maybe not in a politically partisan way, towards how we could give strength to the legislation. We should keep in mind that there have been consultations not only here in Canada but also with other nations, from what I understand, to ensure that we have good, solid legislation going to committee.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have heard the member for Winnipeg North make reference several times today to the resources that have been dedicated to the CRA in order to fight tax evasion and other things of that kind. However, what we have seen from the CRA is a very persistent focus on Canadians in difficult financial situations, who availed themselves of CERB when the government encouraged them to do that at the height of the pandemic but do not have the money to pay the government back. This means that the time and resources spent on pursuing that debt will not yield a return.

Meanwhile, as we heard in debate earlier today with respect to the Panama papers and other revelations about global tax fraud, we see Canada really not comparing at all to our allies in recovering that tax debt. When we talk about the Canada emergency wage subsidy, we know that there were companies that took money that they were supposed to pay directly to workers and, in some cases, they locked out their workers after getting the wage subsidy. The government has not tried to get any of that money back.

How does giving more resources to the CRA help with the problem if it just means the CRA is going to pursue the poor and let the big fish off the hook?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, the government has not let the big fish off the hook. There are hundreds of millions of dollars, getting close to a billion dollars, and it may be just over a billion dollars, but do not quote me on that, over the last number of years that we have invested in the CRA to look at going after the big fish. We have seen a dramatic increase of files now that the CRA is pushing as a direct result of those investments.

With regard to issues that the member talked about in terms of CERB, I am not too sure exactly what the NDP's opinion is. Based on some of the comments I heard, and please correct me if I am wrong, the NDP seems to be of the opinion that circumstances do not matter, that the CRA should not be going after people in whatever form CERB was collected. I think that there—

● (1330)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR EYE CARE ACT

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-284, An Act to establish a national strategy for eye care, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

### Private Members' Business

She said: Madam Speaker, I am very excited to stand today for the second hour to speak on my bill, Bill C-284, which would establish a national eye care strategy, on second reading.

For many years, Canadians have been calling for a comprehensive national plan for vision health, including you, Madam Speaker. You have mentioned this issue many times. Historically, the federal government has lacked any substantive framework on the matter of public eye health care. As it stands, supplementary coverage has only been extended to particular groups of people who qualify for provincial medicare services.

The current structure has created huge gaps in access to care, leaving the majority of Canadians to pay for their eye health care expenses out-of-pocket or forcing them to work private insurance packages into their already narrow budgets. I find this system unacceptable.

The vision loss crisis in Canada requires a coordinated response, and this is what the national eye care strategy is all about. Here are some of the numbers, to give an even better idea of what is going on in vision health in our country. Over eight million Canadians, or one in five, have an eye disease. There are 1.2 million Canadians who live with vision loss or blindness. There were 1,292 deaths associated with vision loss in 2019 alone.

Meanwhile, 75% of vision loss cases can be prevented if patients are diagnosed early and have access to treatment. Dr. Arshinoff of Humber River—Black Creek has told me many stories of people who would have gone blind had they not been able to get immediate attention. Too often, we take our eyes for granted.

My grandmother died with a blinding eye disease, and I had a long-time friend and mentor who was also blind when he died. My aunt suffers from blindness related to macular degeneration today.

Age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma and cataracts are among the top five causes of vision loss here in Canada. AMD affects millions of Canadians and is the leading cause of blindness for those over 55. However, it fails to garner the same attention as other common eye diseases. Many of us in this room may also develop age-related macular degeneration, and as part of this bill, I would like to see February designated as macular degeneration awareness month to give us an opportunity to focus on the signs of AMD and what we can do about it.

*Private Members' Business*

There is a high percentage of seniors and school-aged children who have undiagnosed eye problems. Very few children had an eye test during the pandemic, and many also spent an inordinate amount of time in front of computer screens. Even more, over 3,000 Canadians are in need of and waiting for an eye transplant. The Canadian Transplant Society actively recruits Canadians to become organ donors, but many people have a fear about donating their eyes. In polls, over 81% Canadian respondents say they would donate their organs, but only 35% actually sign up to do that.

Losing one's vision increases mental, financial and social hardship. It can lead to a loss of mobility and inability to live independently, to drive, to read or to participate in physical activity. It can result in a loss of social interaction, which can often lead to depression and other mental illnesses.

Vision loss has a profound impact on individuals, their families and society, costing our economy an estimated \$32.9 billion a year. Of this cost, \$4.2 billion is attributed to reduced productivity in the workplace. Over half of that cost, \$17.4 billion, is also attributed to reduced quality of life, which is primarily due to a loss of independence, especially in the aging population. Over \$983 million was spent last year across Canada on injections to treat AMD.

● (1335)

A national strategy for eye care will allow all provinces and the government, as well as health care researchers and practitioners, to sit down at one table and jointly develop and implement the measures necessary to make sure that all Canadians from coast to coast to coast have equal access to eye care, no matter where they live.

Not long ago, I came across a heartbreaking story of a man who lives in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. It has been five years since he last updated his prescription glasses, even though he has been eligible for a new pair for the last three years. He could not get an appointment with an eye doctor and he is still waiting. Some of the issues have to do with the pandemic, which caused gaps in people getting in for eye doctors' appointments, but a lot of it is because we take it all for granted. Nevertheless, the fact that access to eye health treatment varies widely from province to province seems so wrong to me. With Bill C-284, I am hoping to change that.

I am sure many colleagues have heard many similar stories while talking to people about their eyesight and when they last got their eyes checked. It is something that we just take for granted. By the time a person finds out they have a problem, it is usually too late.

Access to eye health care should not be treated as a luxury. It is a crucial service needed throughout all walks of life. Seniors need eye health care to keep themselves capable and protected. Working people need it to stay dedicated to their responsibilities and to not be excluded because of physical ability. Children and young adults need eye health care to study and navigate the world around them. Eye health care means having a safe and enjoyable quality of life.

Bill C-284, if passed, commits the government to a national strategy dedicated to improved access to eye care and rehabilitation services, a strategy that also envisions the creation of a vision desk at the Public Health Agency of Canada and investments in research to find new treatments to prevent and stop blindness.

The bill is also calling on enhanced access to eye health care for indigenous people who, for far too long, have been neglected and not had any access to any assistance on eye health care.

We take our vision for granted. From social isolation to depression to travel difficulties, there are so many challenges when one cannot see. Many people never stop to consider what it would be like to go blind. We have to increase the awareness of vision loss and what we should be doing every day to protect our eyesight.

I would like to see this piece of legislation move as quickly as possible, as I indicated. Thanks to all the support we have here in the House for this bill, as soon as it can get to committee, get through committee, back here and passed through the Senate, it would become law. I think there are many people across Canada, many of the organizations fighting blindness, CNIB and so on, that are desperately hoping that this time this is actually going to happen.

Throughout my 33 years in political office, my mentor, Paul Valenti, suffered from age-related macular degeneration and died two years ago. My grandmother, Annie Steeves, was blind most of her life, as is my Aunt Ruby Steeves. I am doing this bill for everyone but especially for them.

I am thrilled that in a position as an MP and on behalf of my family and all Canadians, I can truly make a difference by putting forward this bill, which will open the door for more recognition of vision loss and its implications and, of course, with the help of all members in this House and all parties that have indicated that they are very supportive.

Bill C-284 will have a direct, positive impact on Canadians' vision health now and for generations to come. For many years, optometrists, ophthalmologists, researchers and patient advocates have been calling for federal leadership on eye care. The CNIB, Canadian Council for the Blind and Fighting Blindness Canada are just a few of the organizations.

As I mentioned earlier, the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking has been a leader in the fight for vision care in Canada and I am very happy to have you in the Speaker's chair today while I do the second reading.

We have started many great health care initiatives in the chamber over the past several years, including dental care and pharmacare. The national eye care strategy is the next important step in making health care accessible and affordable for all Canadians.

• (1340)

Making eye health, vision care and rehabilitation services a health priority requires our support. I call on all my colleagues in the House to continue to work together, to change attitudes toward blindness, to ensure that the 1.5 million Canadians with sight loss are understood and provided with the necessary supports.

I encourage all members here today to become champions for Bill C-284 and refer it to the health committee as soon as possible.

Together, we can continue the momentum to help the bill become a law for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member and committee chair for her speech.

I am concerned about our youth's eye health. Research shows because of the ever-increasing use of screens, phones and tablets, and also because youth are spending more and more time indoors, there will be an epidemic of retinal detachments in the future. This is a serious eye condition.

Could my colleague comment on this concern?

[*English*]

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro:** Madam Speaker, what I have found is that when I started to do the research on Bill C-284, I knew very little about it. I have been fortunate to have pretty good eyesight all of these years, other than what my own family experienced through blindness.

What I have learned is that the number of things that happen with one's eyes is quite remarkable. When one suddenly starts to notice something about one's eyesight not being the way it was the day before, one needs to get immediately to a doctor, an ophthalmologist or an emergency ward to have that looked at.

Very often, people go completely blind within hours when different things happen, such as the pressure behind their eye and all of those things that the ophthalmologist and optometrists and so on will tell us about.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, in terms of eye care, the member is absolutely correct to say that it is critical. However, the cost of eye care is increasing and, oftentimes, what we are seeing is that it is getting delisted in terms of coverage under the health care plan.

That certainly is the case here in Ontario.

From that perspective, what does the member have to offer in ensuring that coverage is provided so that people can in fact access the necessary health care and eye care that they need?

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro:** Madam Speaker, I enjoy, very much, working with my hon. colleague and I know how hard she fights for her community and, in fact, for all Canadians in a variety of different capacities.

### *Private Members' Business*

I think that one of the things that would come out of Bill C-284 is the fact that the provinces and the federal government have to sit down at the table together and look at the huge cost to society as a result of not having sufficient health care when it comes to eye vision and vision loss. The fact is that they would have to sit at the table together, look at the numbers, look at the impact that it is having on society, and come up with solutions.

I think that is the only way that we are going to get this to move forward, because we have that interaction between the provinces and the Government of Canada. There needs to be more co-operation and that is what a vision desk would do. It would provide that opportunity to do the analysis required and recognize the need for the investments.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for putting forward this really important bill. Eye care is absolutely critical for Canadians. I say this as just a few months ago my husband was a patient having cataracts removed from both eyes, and seeing how much technology has changed, seeing how many things are available now to patients and how we can make that better for all in putting this forward.

On World Sight Day in October, I had the opportunity to meet with an incredible group that came with OneSight. In that group was Dr. Stan Woo from the University of Waterloo. He and I just connected; I guess it was the energy and excitement for what he does at the University of Waterloo, including the research and development and seeing what they can do for patients to ensure that they have the proper care. When there are opportunities for reversals they know what to do to ensure that the treatment, such as medication, can be used. The knowledge and what they are doing there, not just at the university but shared across this great country, and how they can ensure that access to eye care is available from Nunavut down to the Maritimes, is extraordinarily important.

People at the university, when I was there on my visit on January 20, shared with me all of the incredible things that they were doing for research. It was noted here in this bill: "promote research and improve data collection on eye disease prevention and treatment". Being at the university, that is the type of stuff that I saw being done there: making sure that they knew what was happening among their own patient base and making sure that they had the expertise across the country working to ensure the best technologies were going to be there so that the future of eye care was going to be enhanced.

One of the best parts of doing research on private members' bills is looking at what I saw on cataract surgery, where it suggested that there are two separate surgeries. I brought my husband home just a couple of weeks before Christmas, after having double cataract surgery where he had two cataracts on one eye and one on the other, and wearing these cups on his eyes. Within 24 hours I woke up to a husband who for the first time could actually see me. I do not know if he wanted that, but he actually saw me for the first time because he was as blind as a bat in the morning. From the research I was doing, I saw that they used to do them separately and now they can do them together. It is all of this treatment and research and how they can do patient care better.

*Private Members' Business*

This is the type of work that I would hope we would see in a national eye care strategy, and promoting the information and knowledge-sharing between the federal and provincial governments and in relation to eye disease prevention and treatment.

I was very grateful that the member focused on four key issues here in looking at macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. These are four key things that we see especially in our aging population.

For instance, AMD is age-related macular degeneration. We know that there are approximately 2.5 million Canadians being impacted by this and it is impacting people my age and older. It impacts younger people as well, but this is usually something that we see in the aging population, 55 and older.

Understanding things like reducing smoking, diet and genetics in the family through awareness campaigns and what we can do as the national strategy is really important so that people understand their vision. Some of the diseases have no symptoms, so it is important to make sure that we have a program so Canadians in every part of this country, whether they are living in indigenous communities or well-developed communities, have access to this type of care as well. So many of these diseases have no symptoms but absolutely need the kind of care that they have.

We can also look at things such as cataracts, which is the most common type of vision loss. It is something very simple. Many Canadians are going around wearing their glasses. I lose my glasses all the time. People could have that type of surgery, knowing that each and every day it is getting better. I can remember my father having his cataracts removed and now my husband. I am just seeing that with the research we are doing by the doctors working together, we are actually providing great programs and great opportunities for patient care.

● (1345)

Glaucoma is impacting over 728,000 Canadians, which is related to age. I will read this about it:

Glaucoma affects more than 728,000 Canadians and takes the form of a number of related disease types. The most common types are open-angle, which is more prevalent and can go unnoticed due to a lack of early symptoms, and angle-closure, which can be painful with a sudden onset.

These are the things that we learn in research, and being members of Parliament, we get to do the research and learn about these things. It is important that all Canadians understand this.

Currently, there is no cure for glaucoma, but there are treatment options. When people have pressure in their eyes and may not understand what it is, they need to recognize the importance of going to see an optometrist or ophthalmologist to ensure they get the proper care they need.

I am also very supportive of clinical trials. As I said, there is work being done at the University of Waterloo and work being done at the London Health Sciences Centre in my hometown area, in my backyard. We have seen some incredible research, not only at the University of Western Ontario, but also throughout the Collip Circle area, where people are working to make sure that patient care is the number one priority.

Finally, when we are looking at this, I want to talk about the considerations. The bill notes, in subclause 2(3), "The national strategy must take into consideration existing frameworks, strategies and best practices related to the prevention and treatment of eye disease, including those that focus on addressing health inequalities."

I will let the member know that I am very supportive of this bill, but this is where I have to say the government approach has to be right. We cannot do what it has done in the past.

We know the Canadian Dental Association, back in 2014, had a national oral health strategy. We saw the hygienists do it. We saw a number of organizations talking about oral and dental care. When it came to having a program with the government and Canadian dental benefits, it took none of those suggestions.

Instead, the government implemented its own dental program, which was not supported by the Canadian Dental Association at the time because it was not part of those discussions. That is one of my only fears. We need to make sure that people are at the table. We need to make sure that we have the researchers, the ophthalmologists, the optometrists, the patients and the academia, and that we have everybody working together so we have a proper strategy. Unlike the dental program, which was brought out by the government, not everybody was at the table. When we are talking about that, we need to make sure we have diverse opinions as well.

The reason I will continue to elaborate on the Canadian Dental Association is that the government has talked about the number of children who have been impacted by this program, which is sending out cheques to parents. As a person who comes from the dental health field, I would have loved for the government to consult with members of Parliament.

I actually used to go out to teach about dental health. If someone wanted to see a lady who could teach them how to brush their teeth, or if they wanted to sit in my chair, I would show people how to do their little, round brushing.

Those are the types of things that we should be focused on when we are looking at a dental health program. Instead, we saw a government say that it was going to send cheques out to Canadians, and that they will go to get their dental health needs dealt with.

Right now, we are in a crisis in Canada. Families cannot afford to put food on their tables. The government is coming out talking about the number of families, and I think they are saying 250,000 Canadian children have been able to use this program. However, I ask how it got those numbers. Nothing has been audited. We do not have information coming from the Canadian Dental Association or any of the providers that would be providing this type of information because they would not know. All we know is that we gave out cheques to families.

We have the healthy smiles program, which has been working here in Ontario. We should have been using its existing framework and working on that. That is the same type of work I want to see here. I hope we have success with this program and strategy because Canadians need it.

• (1350)

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek, for introducing this bill.

Let me begin by saying that vision health is important. Obviously, it is a component of overall health, but one that is often underestimated. My Conservative colleague has given some personal examples to show that quality of care can change lives and change people's quality of life. I thank the member who introduced this bill.

There are several important elements in the bill, one of which involves raising awareness. It seeks to designate February as age-related macular degeneration awareness month. Obviously, this is important. In my opinion, we should never miss an opportunity to remind people of the importance of issues that affect us all. We all have daily obligations that keep us very busy, and these issues must always be brought to the forefront.

The bill provides for the development of a national strategy. Many national strategies have been proposed lately, including for autism, cancer and diabetes. I am skeptical about the effectiveness of these national strategies, because they generally lead to the tabling of a report that is ignored by the government most of the time. I hope that will not happen in this case if this bill is adopted. However, it needs to be said that national strategies often face the same fate as Labatt 50, in that they get shelved.

Although we agree in principle, let us be careful not to encroach on Quebec's jurisdiction. This bill seeks to raise public awareness, but it affects health, which is a provincial jurisdiction.

That being said, the issue is truly important. I think we know the data. Data from 2019 shows that 1.2 million Canadians suffer from diseases that could lead to vision loss, and 4.1% of those people could become blind. We know that eight million Canadians suffer from an eye disease that may lead to blindness. For some of these diseases, blindness is preventable.

We know that the direct annual health care costs related to these diseases leading to vision loss can reach up to \$9.5 billion. Of course, there are human costs, but there are also social costs, such as lost productivity because of these diseases, and those costs can reach \$4.3 billion per year.

I mentioned age-related macular degeneration earlier. With the growth and aging of the population, the costs related to those diseases could increase substantially. These are issues of critical importance.

Let us not forget that health is a provincial and Quebec jurisdiction. Quebec already has a number of programs in place to address various ocular conditions. Vision care services are covered by the government in Quebec for people under 18 years of age and people

### *Private Members' Business*

aged 65 and over. Last month, reimbursements for ocular prostheses were increased. It had been 30 years since those amounts had been increased, so that is progress.

This also serves to show that Quebec and the provinces need funding, transfers and money to be able to cover these programs. Developing a national strategy is all well and good, but the levels of government that are responsible for providing this care on the ground must be properly funded.

The RAMQ's visual devices program helps people obtain assistive devices like video magnifiers, ocular prostheses, night-vision goggles and Braille typewriters. These programs seek to improve the quality of life of persons with visual impairments, but they are expensive.

I will say it again. As the population ages, these diseases will become increasingly common. We will need to be in a position to improve the quality of life and productivity of the people who live with them.

• (1355)

There is talk of having a national macular degeneration awareness day, but I have to say that I would have liked this bill to include a national degeneration of health transfers awareness day. I offer that as a suggestion. For two years or more, the provinces and Quebec have been calling for \$28 billion a year in extra transfers for health; that way, the federal government's contribution to provincial spending on health would reach 35%.

I know that this cause is important to my colleague and that she is well-meaning, but inside these envelopes there could be money for eye care. A national strategy and a report identify a number of things, but do not provide care to those who need it, care that could change their daily lives. The government is obviously short-sighted about the needs of Quebec and that is rather sad.

As I said, the aging population is going to increase the cost of health care and these transfers are necessary. In response to the aging population, more should be done in research and development and to expand our programs, including support programs for those who have vision problems.

There is also a shortage of workers, which means that we will be trying to keep older people in the labour market. We know that vision problems are bad for productivity and for the economy. They are also bad for those who want to keep working.

Statistics Canada's most recent report states, and I quote, "the percentage of people with self-reported good vision without correction decreased with age." That is a bit like the Liberal government's vision regarding health transfers. It has been diminishing with age. The government's vision has been diminishing for eight years now.

*Private Members' Business*

For almost two years, we have been calling for a summit to be held with the provincial premiers and the current Prime Minister to discuss these issues. Instead, what the government did was to impose conditions on the provinces, which means that they are currently unable to enhance their existing programs or design new programs that would provide people with better eye care.

It seems as though the Liberals might need some Bloc Québécois glasses to better understand the needs of Quebec. I would like to offer them mine. Practically speaking, that would help them to provide care to those who need it, which could make all the difference in people's self-esteem, how they function in society, and their work and family life. This is a human issue. We are all equal when faced with the various health problems we may experience throughout our lives, and we should all have access to care.

Although I am clearly making some jokes, I hope my colleague realizes that I welcome her initiative. I know that she has been holding consultations and reaching out to various groups. Her intentions are excellent and, as I said, we agree in principle. We will be proposing amendments, but I understand that this is an important issue for my colleague, and I acknowledge that.

I will close by saying that the statistics clearly demonstrate that the issue of degenerative vision affects women in particular. I do not fully understand what causes this, and I will not presume to be a doctor or biologist, but I do know that there are also gender equality issues. Helping people become more aware of an issue, more aware that care is needed and that this affects women more than men—there is a fundamental equity aspect to that.

As I mentioned, we will support it in principle, study it in committee and act in good faith. We are skeptical about the outcome of these major strategies, but our colleague is certainly making it possible to discuss this important issue, raise public awareness and reflect on the issue of vision care. I thank her for that.

• (1400)

[*English*]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, before I begin my speech on the bill today, I want to take a moment to recognize today as the National Day of Mourning, to honour every worker who goes to work, and to say very clearly that they deserve to return home safely at the end of their workday. I would also like to take a moment to remember those who have been injured or lost their lives, and to recommit ourselves to fighting for a safe work environment for all workers.

I am very pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-284, an act to establish a national strategy for eye care. I would like to thank the member for Humber River—Black Creek for introducing this important bill with respect to eye health for all Canadians. New Democrats support this bill and the important steps it would take to improve access to eye care for all Canadians.

This legislation would set out a national strategy to support the prevention and treatment of eye disease to ensure better health outcomes for Canadians. It states the following:

(2) The national strategy must describe the various forms of eye disease and include measures to

(a) identify the training, education and guidance needs of health care practitioners and other professionals related to the prevention and treatment of eye disease, including clinical practice guidelines;

(b) promote research and improve data collection on eye disease prevention and treatment;

(c) promote information and knowledge sharing between the federal and provincial governments in relation to eye disease prevention and treatment; and

(d) ensure that Health Canada is able to rapidly consider new applications for treatments and devices used for macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy.

This legislation also designates the month of February as age-related macular degeneration month.

Organizations including Fighting Blindness Canada, the Canadian Council of the Blind, the CNIB, Diabetes Canada, the Canadian Association of Optometrists, the Canadian Ophthalmological Society, and the Canadian Association of Retired Persons have advocated for a national eye care strategy for many years, and it is long past time for action on this issue.

Sadly, eye health has been underfunded and deprioritized in Canada for far too long. As a result, millions of Canadians are being put at unnecessary risk of vision loss because they lack access to eye care. Currently, access to eye care varies widely from province to province, resulting in variable health outcomes and exacerbating inequalities in our health care system. As well, 39% of Canadians do not have access to vision health benefits. This is wrong. Over eight million Canadians are living with an eye condition that puts them at significant risk of blindness. An estimated 1.2 million Canadians are currently living with vision loss, with many facing a lack of investment in services and supports that impacts their ability to live life to its fullest. This number is expected to grow to two million by 2050. That is staggering.

Routine eye exams play a crucial role in the prevention of vision loss. If certain eye diseases are diagnosed early enough, they can be effectively managed before expensive and sometimes invasive measures are required. If diagnosed early, and if people have access to treatment, vision loss can be prevented in 75% of cases. Further, 70% of existing vision impairment in Canada is estimated to be correctable with prescription glasses. A sizable proportion of correctable vision impairment is related to the barriers to accessing vision care in Canada.



Most guidelines recommend having an eye exam once a year for people aged six to 18, or 65 years and older, as well as for those with diabetes or an eye disease. For healthy people aged 19 to 64, one visit every two years is considered sufficient. For many Canadians, this is out of reach due to out-of-pocket expenses, and 39% of Canadians do not have access to vision health benefits. Vision care is not a luxury; it is health care provision and must be treated as such.

● (1405)

However, some provinces are moving in the wrong direction and reducing access to eye care for those who need it the most. For instance, the Conservative government in Ontario announced that, starting September 1, free annual eye exams paid for through the Ontario health insurance plan will no longer be available to all seniors.

A study commissioned by the Canadian Council of the Blind and Fighting Blindness Canada has raised alarms on the state of vision care in Canada and the impact of the COVID pandemic on eye care services. In 2020, 1,437 Canadians experienced vision loss as a direct result of treatment disruptions, and the percentage of Canadians reporting that they had an eye exam within the last two years declined between 2019 and 2021.

The federal government must lead the way in saying that eye care is health care and improving access to services and treatment.

New Democrats have always stood for publicly funded health care, from head to toe, including eye care. Our founding leader, Tommy Douglas, fought tirelessly and relentlessly for the universal public health care system that has become a fundamental Canadian value. In fact, the notion that every person deserves access to health care as a basic human right, regardless of their ability to pay, was one of the founding principles of the New Democratic Party in 1961. It was always the NDP's intention that the public health care system would include eye care. At the founding convention, the NDP stated, "Believing that a country's most precious possession is the health of its citizens, the New Party will introduce a National Health Plan, providing benefits to those who need them without regard to their ability to pay. The plan will cover a full range of services: medical, surgical, dental and optical treatment, as well as prescribed drugs and appliances."

This belief remains an unfinished project, as many services, such as eye care, continue to be left out of Canada's national health system. However, the NDP's position and advocacy have not wavered. The NDP's 2019 platform committed to achieving head-to-toe public health care, including eye care, for all Canadians. The NDP's 2021 platform also committed to a long-term path to providing public coverage for eye care, along with other health services.

In May 2021, the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing introduced Motion No. 86. I want to thank the member for her leadership and vision, no pun intended, in bringing it forward. This motion called on the federal government to work towards the creation of a national strategy for action on eye health and vision care, and that has brought us to where we are today with the bill before us, so I thank the member for that.

### *Private Members' Business*

I am pleased that my colleague from the Liberal Party agrees that we need a national strategy for eye care, and I hope that members from other parties will also support the bill.

In 2003, the Government of Canada made a commitment at the World Health Organization to develop a vision health plan for Canada by 2007 and implement this plan by 2009. Well, it has been 20 years since the Liberal government of the day made this commitment, but to date, no plan has been developed.

As recently as July 2021, the Government of Canada voted in the UN General Assembly to enshrine eye health as part of the United Nations' sustainable development goals. In this resolution, the establishment of a national vision health plan was endorsed again by Canada. It is time for action and leadership on this issue at the federal level.

I hope that all members of the House will listen to the experts and support a national strategy for eye care by voting in favour of Bill C-284. Eye care is health care. It needs our support. It needs all levels of government coming together, and we need to recognize that.

● (1410)

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today and speak to Bill C-284, put forward by the member for Humber River—Black Creek. The bill addresses a national strategy for eye care. It is an honour to speak to this today because my wife worked at an optometrist's office for 23 years.

I had not expected to speak to this bill, but I am honoured to be able to do so today and to relay some of the experience that she had and that I had in working with the great doctors there. Dr. Beckner, Dr. Allaway, Dr. Ewanyshyn, Dr. Thompson and Dr. Geire have all provided such professional health care in our community of Salmon Arm, as all optometrists do across this country.

What I learned from speaking with them and with my wife about the importance of eye care is something that I think all of us in this chamber should see. We should see that eye care and the health care issues that can be discovered through regular eye care are very important.

There is a long list of diseases and health care problems that can be discovered through a regular eye exam. I suffer from dry eye. That, in itself, is just more of a discomfort, but dry eye causes a person's eyes to water. Tears are not actually the fluid that someone's eyes need. They need the oils that come out with those tears. If they do not have enough of the oils, the eyes feel dry and the person continuously tears more. When I am exposed to sunlight or to wind, I suffer that much more, but this is something that optometrists can help with.

*Private Members' Business*

We have heard others speak about cataracts today. The advancements that we have seen over the last number of years in making an operation to address and remove cataracts have continuously improved the lives of seniors.

I have not gone through that process yet, but because I go to see an optometrist regularly, I have been told that I am in the very early stages. I am a long way from needing that operation yet, but I am confident that by regularly attending an eye exam with an optometrist, I will hopefully know when the time is coming that my vision has been impaired.

Another instance that I was not aware of is something that is done by optometrists called a visual field test. That is where the optometrist or their assistant can check for the range of vision out of one's eyes. People might think that everyone would have very similar range of vision, but they do not.

I had a case where my eyelids were actually longer and more relaxed, so that they were coming down and blocking my vision. It was a fairly simple operation. I just went into an eye surgeon's office and had it done one afternoon. There was no problem with my vision. I had a short recovery.

However, in other people, without having that addressed, they can lose their field of vision. It could be something as significant as not seeing a stoplight. Because it is up at the top level of where they are looking, they may not see a stoplight turn red in front of them. Something as simple as that can be picked up by an optometrist with a visual field test.

We have heard of so many other eye health and actual body health issues that can be picked up through a regular eye exam. These include diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma. We have heard today that 728,000 Canadians are suffering from glaucoma. There is also retinal detachment. A lot of people do not know what this is, but if the retina becomes fully detached from the back of the eye, it causes permanent loss of vision. Optometrists and their assistants, through eye exams, can determine if this is happening; early intervention is a key piece to making sure that this sight loss is not permanent.

● (1415)

Diabetes is another issue. I had that explained to me when I went in for an eye exam. They look through very powerful cameras and lights at the blood vessels in the back of the eye. Often those blood vessels cross each other and, if there is extra pressure where they cross, they can identify a bulge in the blood vessels. That can be used to identify whether there is a possible issue with diabetes, high blood pressure and other things that are part of this. I am neither an optometrist nor a doctor, by any means, but these are pieces that I have picked up by listening and going in for regular eye exams.

I hope this bill will lead to not really what is said in the bill, but something that I hope can be addressed at committee stage when looking at this bill. A lot of the terminology in the bill itself refers to "eye disease". I would be interested in following this as it proceeds through the committee stage to see whether the bill continues to speak to eye disease, or whether it would possibly change to "eye health" and "overall health", because so many things can be picked up through the eye exams, which I have just spoken about.

The bill does not really address the issue of the availability of training for optometrists in the country. One thing I have noted, after looking quickly, is that there are two schools of optometry, one in Waterloo and one in Montreal. There are none in western Canada. There reflects an inequity in training for those who want to become optometrists.

It is a seven- to eight-year program, and it is very much like becoming a family physician. It is very expensive training, and there is extra cost for students coming from western Canada to those training centres, which are only available in eastern Canada. I am hoping that during the committee stage, that may also be looked at, or at least something is included in the strategy to include the availability of training in other parts of the country. It is obviously an added expense for those from the west, but anyone from the north would be much more burdened by the extra cost.

The purpose of this bill is admirable. The member spoke about her family members who lost their sight. That has not happened in my family, as we have been fortunate. We have been fortunate enough to be able to discover if there were eye problems ahead of time. We were able to get glasses, corrective lenses, contacts lens, whatever was needed, to continue our daily lives. If we can put together a strategy so that many more Canadians can retain their sight, no matter where they live, what their background is, what their wealth or lack of wealth is, that is an admirable goal. As I said, I will be happy to follow this bill as it goes through the committee stage to see if we can improve upon it and make sure that it deals, not just with eye disease, but with eye health and overall body health.

I have heard other members recognize that today is the National Day of Mourning for those who have lost their lives in the workplace from workplace disease or illness. One of my staff members attended a ceremony in my riding today. Workplace diseases can also affect eye health and overall human health.

I am grateful for the opportunity to stand to speak today, and I look forward to following this bill through the process.

● (1420)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be joining this debate. Like the member said previously, today is the National Day of Mourning for those who were injured or killed in the workplace. That reminds me, before I get into the subject matter of the bill, that there used to be a Sobeys in my riding in Douglasdale on the Douglasglenn side. I do not know if many constituents know this, but there is a plaque there. There used to be a factory there where five or six workers were killed many decades before. That happens to be on the side of a Gold's Gym. I think most people have forgotten it, because it kind of sits in a corner, but it has a very lively description of that event and what happened, so this is an important day for all of us to remember.

We are on this private member's bill we are debating today. I obviously have eye care needs. I wear glasses now. About 10 years ago I realized I had trouble driving at night, because I could not see white lines very clearly. I went to see my family's optometrist, and they said I do need glasses. It is not very bad for me, but it runs in my family on two sides, and that is why I will be supporting the bill.

On my father's side, he has had many problems with his eyesight throughout most of his life. He still has very thick glasses made of glass; they are not the plastic ones, because glass is the only type that can actually help him with the type of eye care he needs. There is my brother. Shortly after we landed here in Canada we thankfully obtained Canadian citizenship, because I do not know if we could have afforded the expensive operations my brother required to keep his eyesight. He would have lost his eyesight if not for the Quebec health care system at the time. He almost did, because the care being provided at the time was not as good as it should have been. His eyes were actually infected, so he lost quite a bit of his eyesight. He is legally blind in one of his eyes, and the doctors told him just a few years ago, just before the pandemic, that if he did not start practising and doing different exercises to strengthen his muscles, he would have his driver's licence taken away eventually. It is very difficult to keep one's job if one loses their eyesight in Canada. He would still be able to see enough, but he just would not be allowed to drive anymore.

I think this is an important strategy for this Parliament to debate. Like the previous member who spoke, I think there is a lot more that could be included in the private member's bill. Hopefully the member would be willing to consider some of those amendments.

I know it is being moved by the member for Humber River—Black Creek, and I salute her efforts on this. She is a long-time parliamentarian. I have a lot of respect for her work and her time in this House.

I do have a Yiddish proverb, so I will put it in now, just in case I forget about it later on: “When the heart is full, the eyes overflow”. It is a beautiful proverb. It describes when someone is so happy they begin to cry out of happiness, and it usually blocks their eyesight. If there is a great joke or the situation one finds themselves in, typically with family, fills them with so much mirth it brings tears to their eyes, it is a good kind of happiness.

I will recognize the fact that the member is also going to be making age-related macular degeneration month in the month of February. It happens to be the same month my brother was born in, so I just thought that was providence. It is nice to see as well. It does not just happen to the old. Like I mentioned, my brother almost lost his eyesight when he was little, and he needed an operation.

All my children are affected, as many members know, by a rare chronic kidney condition called Alport syndrome, and although it is a kidney condition, it also affects the eyes. It affects the eyes and

### *Private Members' Business*

can lead to four conditions. One is peripheral coalescing fleck retinopathy. Do not ask me what that is in detail. I hopefully never will discover. The others are corneal opacities, anterior lenticonus and cataracts, and temporal retinal thinning.

My youngest son, Enoch, has glasses already. His need for glasses is related to this rare kidney condition that also affects the eyes and all the organs of the body. In his particular case he will probably need both hearing aids and glasses. Maybe some day we will get to the point where we will do a hearing aid national strategy in this place, but eye care for my children is something we are always watching for, because it is something they need.

I know many of us are looking at seniors who suffer through age-related loss of sight, and that is something I see in my parents as well. It also happens for the young.

Both sides of my family have members, old and young, who are affected by the need for better eye care. Other members have mentioned that eye care in Canada does not come cheap, depending on whether someone needs basic eyeglasses or if they need more attentive care from an ophthalmologist.

In the case of my family, we do need of an ophthalmologist, because my family members require much more in-depth care. The Province of Alberta provides excellent coverage for young people, those under 18, but especially those under 12 get excellent coverage for their eye care.

• (1425)

In the case of my children, like I said, because of this rare chronic kidney condition, they get a lot of specialist follow-up for their eyes. I met a lot of youth who needed much more care as they got older because of this condition called Alport syndrome, which leads to a degeneration in the eyes much earlier in their lives.

As we debate the importance of both research and the quality and availability of care, some members mentioned the possibility for improvements and additions to this private member's bill, maybe expanding in some areas and perhaps tightening in certain areas.

• (1430)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Unfortunately, the member's time is up for now.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

It being 2:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

[*Translation*]

Have a good weekend, everyone.

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)



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