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Tuesday, February 4, 2020

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 4, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)
[*English*]

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

The Speaker: Pursuant to section 79.2(2) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, entitled “Reviewing the Fiscal and Distributional Analysis of the Federal Carbon Pricing System”.

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JUDGES ACT

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code.

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

* * *

SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-201, An Act to develop a national school food program for children.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to introduce my bill, the school food program for children act. I would like to thank the hon. member for Vancouver East for seconding the bill.

This legislation would require the Minister of Health, in consultation with the provincial and territorial governments and other relevant stakeholders, to develop a national school food nutrition program to ensure that all children in Canada would have access to healthy food. The program would operate at little or no direct cost to children or their families, build on existing school food programs across Canada, use best practices from other jurisdictions and promote evidence-based healthy food education.

In a country as prosperous as Canada, no child should have to struggle through the school day on an empty stomach. However, today, more than 1.5 million children live in families that have diffi-

culty putting food on the table. Canada remains among the few industrialized countries without a universal school food program.

A national school food program would not only give every student in Canada access to nutritious food, it would make healthy eating a daily lesson for our kids.

I am pleased to see in budget 2019 that the government announced its intention to establish a national school food program in Canada. This legislation represents an important first step toward making that goal a reality.

I call on all parliamentarians to work together to support this important health and social justice initiative.

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

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-202, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (assault against a health care worker).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to introduce an important bill to Parliament, again, with thanks to the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain, for seconding it.

The legislation would amend the Criminal Code to require a court to consider that if the victim of an assault were a health care worker, this fact would be an aggravating circumstance for the purposes of sentencing.

Violence against health care workers has become a pervasive and growing problem within the Canadian health care system. Over the last decade, violence-related lost-time claims for front-line health care workers has increased by 66%, three times the rate for police and correctional officers combined.

National data also shows that 61% of nurses have experienced a serious problem with some form of violence over a recent 12-month period.

The bill would send a strong message that those who provide such critical services must be treated with respect and security. They take care of our health and safety and we must take care of theirs.

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I call on all parliamentarians to support this vital and overdue legislation.

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

The Speaker: I want to outline for members that for private members' bills, we want something succinct. I would remind hon. members to make their explanations as succinct as possible.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Wednesday, February 5, 2020, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

• (1010)

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition that is signed by 25 constituents from the Northwest Territories.

The petitioners call upon the government to support Motion No. 1, a motion for a green new deal.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from my constituents.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to support Motion No. 1, a made-in-Canada green new deal. It is the first initiative before the House of Commons that calls on Canada to take bold and rapid action to adopt social and equitable climate action to tackle the climate emergency.

The motion also addresses the worsening socio-economic and racial inequalities at the same time, while ending fossil fuel subsidies, closing offshore tax havens, supporting workers impacted by the transition and creating well-paying, unionized jobs in the shift to a clean and renewable energy economy.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Lead-

er of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION — INSTRUCTION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC) moved:

That the House: (a) condemn the decision of the Parole Board of Canada that led to a young woman's death by an inmate during day parole in January of this year; and (b) instruct the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to conduct hearings into this matter, including a review of the changes made by the government in 2017 to the board's nomination process, with the view to recommend measures to be taken to ensure another tragedy such as this never happens again.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

Today is an important day for the official opposition, but it is especially important for the family of Marylène Levesque, which is entitled to answers. Marylène Levesque was a 22-year-old woman who was murdered two weeks ago in Quebec City, in my region.

This tragedy really had an impact on me. I simply cannot understand how it came to be that an inmate on parole was allowed to have sex with women. Somehow, someone recommended that this man have sexual relations even though he killed his ex-partner in 2004 and was sentenced to life in prison in 2006.

The first question we should ask ourselves in this case is why the individual was released before his 15-year sentence was up. The second question is about how the parole officer's strategy was implemented and why this officer's report was signed and endorsed by two Parole Board members. The report stated that the paroled inmate had a problem with women. That was clear. The man killed his ex-partner and, for nearly 15 years, demonstrated that he was not capable of engaging in normal relationships with women.

The parole report indicates, and I quote:

During the hearing, your parole officer underlined a strategy that was developed with the goals that would allow you to meet women in order to meet your sexual needs. Your CMT...gave permission for such meetings provided that you were transparent.

That is the issue that prompted us to move the motion we are debating today in the House of Commons. How could two board members agree to and sign a report that allowed a woman-killer, someone with psychological problems in his relationships with women, to meet his sexual needs with women? That implies that he can have dealings with prostitutes and that he can have a relationship with other women. However, these women have no idea who he is or where he comes from. Those members basically let a fox into the henhouse.

The Quebec City region, Quebec and now all of Canada are appalled by this story. Let us not forget that Marylène Levesque paid with her life because an inmate like Eustachio Gallese was given that permission.

These issues are making us question how the Parole Board of Canada could have undergone such a complete transformation in recent years. The changes began from the moment we changed governments in 2015. The contracts of the experienced members already on the board were not renewed. The government decided that members would be politically appointed, and so people were appointed. Surely they were good people. I do not want to accuse those individuals, but the fact remains that people were politically appointed to the Parole Board, to strategic positions, without any support from experienced members. In the workplace, a senior employee is usually always paired with a new one to ensure the transfer of knowledge.

These are fundamental questions, because these people have a tremendous responsibility to ensure public safety. They recommend and sign off on granting parole to murderers, people who have been sentenced to life in prison by a court. They apply for parole, and based on various criteria, their applications are approved. In this particular case, a man who had murdered a woman was allowed to meet with women to satisfy his sexual needs. That is incomprehensible. No one can understand this. Even Robert Pigeon, the chief of the Service de police de la Ville de Québec, said in an interview last weekend that he had never seen anything like this in his whole career and that he could not understand how this could happen.

There is another problem. In 2018, the Auditor General of Canada reported that there were problems with the supervision and accommodation of offenders on parole.

• (1015)

This combination of factors led to an explosive situation. I will say this again, Marylène Levesque paid with her life. Whatever some people may say, Marylène was earning a living as an “escort”. It is currently illegal to purchase sexual services. However, we have seen that a government report proposed enabling him to meet with women and, indirectly, with “escorts”, which is illegal. Canadians have many questions about what happened.

Furthermore, what happened to Marylène Levesque was not an isolated incident. Two years ago, we spent a long time debating the murder of Tori Stafford in this very chamber.

Many will remember this Canadian little girl who was abducted, raped, tortured and murdered by Michael Rafferty and Terri-Lynne McClintic. Her body was found in Ontario. It was an unbelievable tragedy, and the murderers were given life sentences. After just six

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years, however, we learned that Ms. McClintic had been transferred from a maximum-security penitentiary to the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, a minimum-security facility in Saskatchewan. Since Ms. McClintic claimed to be indigenous, she was sent to a healing lodge where there were only cameras and residents can open the door and leave whenever they like. No one in Canada could understand how that could have happened. We raised the matter in the House of Commons, but the Liberals did not want to change anything. After considerable pressure and public outrage, the government finally sent Ms. McClintic back to a regular prison.

Those decisions have prompted many, many questions about the entire decision-making process. That is why we would like a review of how the Parole Board of Canada operates and how, and on what basis, decisions are made.

Quebec's justice minister, Sonia LeBel, summed up the situation surrounding the murder of Marylène Levesque in a single sentence, “Reintegration has to be a consideration in the parole process, but the overriding principle has to be, first and foremost, the safety and security of the public, the safety of our citizens.”

On that, in 2017, eight former PBC members sent a letter to the Prime Minister. The following two paragraphs provide a clear summary of the situation, “We are Parole Board of Canada members who wish to share our serious concerns about the member reappointment process, which does not seem to be transparent.”

Former members also mentioned the following in that letter: “Our primary mandate is to protect the public, and we fear that this mandate is currently in jeopardy.”

This is a letter that was sent in 2017 by eight former Parole Board members who were already flagging the problem. They never received a response from the Prime Minister.

We must not get distracted by the life that Marylène Levesque chose to live. We believe that the important thing to understand is that the parole conditions of the individual in question were unacceptable and the entire process has to be reviewed, including the way Parole Board members are appointed.

• (1020)

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the concern he has raised.

Could the hon. member describe the reaction of Canadians in his home province of Quebec, and how their reaction resonates with what many other Canadians have been thinking and feeling with respect to the parole system? It is at the crux of this issue and how we need to address some of the issues that have Canadians concerned for public safety.

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[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The situation has been incredibly explosive in Quebec. People do not understand. They wonder how our government could allow a murderer on parole to meet with women.

A killer of women got permission to visit women to have his sexual needs met. People are asking us, as elected officials, to do something. We too often hear people say that a topic will last for three or four days, or maybe a week, but then it disappears and the situation keeps happening. People always say that politicians are all talk and no action. That is why we are here today.

I am pleased that this motion was moved and that we have an opposition day to debate this topic. I hope that my colleagues in all parties will support the motion, because we need to get to the bottom of this.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have two questions for my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

First, has he read the September 19 decision in which the board clearly indicates to the corrections officer that visits to massage parlours are completely inappropriate for a correctional plan? Does he realize that this was the board's decision, and has he reviewed it?

Second, I would like to ask my colleague whether he read the letter released yesterday by the president of the union representing corrections officers. He made a direct reference to the devastating cuts made in 2012 as part of the then Conservative government's deficit reduction plan. These cuts had an impact on corrections officers' ability to do their jobs.

Does the member have anything to say about any of this?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, naturally I have the report here and we have everything we need.

However, given that the Liberals have been in power since 2015, their accusation about Conservative cuts of five years ago is a pretty pathetic defence. These are questionable appointments and we have to shed light on that. I will certainly not allow myself to be distracted by the type of comments that the Liberals always trot out to try to defend themselves.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, in the past, the Conservative government had a reputation for being tough on crime. I am thinking in particular of the criminalization of young offenders. I would like to know how he can reconcile this with the rehabilitation of offenders in the Conservative Party platform.

• (1025)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: That is a different issue, Madam Speaker. It is another matter. The Conservatives are tougher on criminals. We want criminals who deserve to be in prison to stay in prison, but we also believe in rehabilitation. We cannot allow a criminal who killed his wife and is unable to have a relationship with women to be sent to women to satisfy his sexual needs. No one can make me understand that. That is why we need explanations.

[English]

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the Conservative motion by my hon. colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

The motion denounces the decision made by the Parole Board in Quebec that cost the life of a 22-year-old woman at the hands of a dangerous repeat offender. It seeks immediate action to review Parole Board nominations that contributed to putting a dangerous offender on the streets, and to have Parliament recommend steps so that this will never happen again.

Given the recent comments by the Minister of Public Safety on finding common ground with all parties to protect Canadians, I would think that he would be supportive of our motion. I imagine every member of the House will condemn the murder of a young woman by a man who beat his previous partner to death with a hammer, and who was released on parole with permission to seek out women in order to manage his sexual needs.

As one columnist noted, it appears the Parole Board's release plan assumed this offender's right to access a woman's body. Any man who cannot control his urges is not fit to be released back into society. Our country is founded on freedom and respect: respect for one another, respect for the law and respect for our values. In this case, the Parole Board's decision is reprehensible.

I will not pretend that this entire problem is the fault of the Liberal government or of any single previous government or decision. The problem we face is a parole and release system that favours offenders over victims. It puts the rights of offenders ahead of the safety of our communities.

This is a result of the current government's inaction, as well as previous governments' actions or inactions, court rulings and court precedents. None of that should prevent the House from challenging the status quo and moving toward a better system of preventing the release of those who are not ready to be law-abiding members of our society.

Let me be clear. We are not talking about anyone who has ever gone to jail. We are not saying that if people have done something wrong, as we all have at some point to different degrees, there is no redemption. I believe in redemption.

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For those who have committed crimes, we lay out very clear ideas of what that looks like based on their efforts to reform, to rehabilitate, to seek to address their failings or challenges, to train and educate themselves for a post-release period and to never again be in trouble with the law. However, there have been too many instances like this one. There have been too many recent decisions by Liberal-appointed Parole Board members to release repeat dangerous offenders back into our communities without the adequate protections and information. That lack of accountability and of good, sound decision-making is why the House urgently needs to review and revise how it treats violent offenders.

Dangerous offenders are deemed by the courts. They are held for indeterminate prison sentences because of the malicious repeat offences they have carried out. Dangerous offenders have a pattern of behaviour and persistent aggression that makes them a threat to others.

It is not up to society to accept dangerous offenders. It is up to those dangerous offenders to accept the laws and values of our society in order to be released. However, the Liberal government seems too eager to defend the rights of dangerous offenders and others who are brought before the courts. Dangerous offenders get off too easily under the Liberal government.

Under Bill C-75, in order to address court backlogs, the Liberals reduced sentences and allowed sentences for more violent crimes to be reduced, even to fines. Under Bill C-71, Liberals went after law-abiding firearms owners for the actions of criminals and gangs. In national security laws, they increased red tape, put more effort into watching the public servants who defend Canadians and put less effort into monitoring known radicalized threats, returning ISIS terrorists and foreign threats.

Two years ago, we went through a very similar scenario. Canadians were outraged when Terri-Lynne McClintic, a woman who helped lure, assault, rape and murder eight-year-old Tori Stafford, was transferred to a lower-security healing lodge instead of staying in prison. The indigenous community not far from my riding did not want her there, as she was not indigenous. This raised many questions as to why she was being transferred in the first place. No child predator should ever be sent to a prison where children and families are present.

The Liberals said nothing was wrong, launched a months-long investigation and then determined that they were wrong. They slapped a minor edit on their policies and said everything was fine and would be fine. If the policies were applied properly the first time, that transfer never would have happened.

• (1030)

The offender at the centre of the tragedy is a violent, dangerous offender, whether the law puts that label on him or not. The Parole Board and the minister should have known and should have had the processes in place to prevent this latest tragedy. However, there is no accountability left for the minister or government. Did the Parole Board fail in its duty to Canadians in this circumstance? Yes, it did. Was it likely that former minister Ralph Goodale's decision to appoint fresh and untrained people in the position to make these decisions a factor? It certainly appears that way.

Under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the purpose of conditional release is to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society that will best facilitate the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens. The act specifically notes that the paramount consideration by the Parole Board is public safety protection. The release of offenders who are deemed unable to stop themselves from harming others, who pose a risk to women or who have been instructed to break the law by hiring women for sex can in no way live up to the standards set out in law.

Even if there was some justification for a dangerous, violent offender to be released, parole officers are overwhelmed with workloads. According to their union, workloads are insurmountable and there is a real risk to Canadians because they cannot keep tabs on parolees. With the Liberals releasing many dangerous offenders into the community, this issue is being compounded.

For example, Madilyn Harks, formerly known as Matthew Ralf Harks, is a serial rapist who has preyed on young women, with three convictions for sexual assault against girls under the age of eight. She was released into Brampton, one of the largest suburbs in Canada, despite posing a risk to the tens of thousands of children in that community. After public outrage and political pressure on local Liberal MPs, she was removed. Was she a risk to Canadians? Absolutely. Was she placed in a poorly chosen spot? Absolutely. It was only fixed, though, after political and public outrage.

Randall Hopley, a serial child predator, was released into Vancouver despite the Parole Board stating that it was unable to manage his risks to Canadian children. Peter Whitmore, who has many convictions for assaulting young boys, has repeatedly received light sentences for the rape and assault of children. After abducting two boys, tying them up and raping them, he has been locked up again. However, he is now eligible for parole, and it would seem only a matter of time before the Liberals' Parole Board will release him again, if we can believe it. There are many examples like this, more than time allows to mention here.

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None of these crimes needed to happen and none of these victims needed to be put at risk and victimized. However, we can all agree that we presume innocence and that the taking away of freedoms under the Criminal Code should not be treated lightly. There are times when it is clearly the best and only course of action. The actions of the guilty are the fault of the guilty. There is no right to cause pain, harm and suffering to others. When the Parole Board sees a threat that is not manageable, there needs to be a mechanism to ensure that Canadians are not put at further risk. We do not need to accept the decisions of murderers, rapists, pedophiles or repeat and serial offenders as a foregone conclusion. However, once people have reached that state, it is incumbent upon them to show and act in a manner that enables their release, not the other way around. It is not beholden on Canadians to accept their intolerable and hateful acts. Criminals are not the victims.

In conclusion, my colleague's motion is justified in light of the many issues facing our communities. Public safety has been put on the back burner time and again by the government and its political manoeuvring. Reforming how we manage dangerous offenders would seem something that all parliamentarians can get behind and can contribute toward protecting Canadians.

However, I suspect that the Liberals will invent yet another excuse why action is not needed right now. They will respond by saying that they have an internal inquiry under way, a response we have heard many times. However, there is an inherent bias to defend the system by those in charge of making those very decisions. Another McClintic-style "sweep it under the rug" decision should not be tolerated.

It is time that other members of Parliament took the role that the minister is too timid to tackle. I encourage my colleagues to vote in favour of a study to strengthen and review the parole system, ensure the appropriate funding is in place and that the safety of Canadians comes ahead of any Liberal political concerns.

● (1035)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member's comments about pedophiles and sex offenders being released into the community by this government are not true and create fear in Canadians that is simply unwarranted. Has the member actually read the Parole Board's decision in this case, which explicitly opposed the offender visiting massage parlours?

I would like the hon. member to speak to the decisions and the laws that the previous Harper government passed that criminalize sex workers and put young women like poor Marylène Levesque in the position where she was exposed to someone dangerous because the Conservative government under Stephen Harper criminalized sex work.

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I am trying to dissect whether I heard the member correctly. We are going to blame a previous Harper government for a decision to protect Canadians?

Let us take off the table the whole aspect of whether prostitution should be criminalized or not. The fact is that a violent offender was released into the public. The Parole Board knew the risk. The risk was identified to the board and yet it continued to say that the person should be released, that it would go ahead and let him out on

day parole even though he has many years left on his sentence. He definitely had not demonstrated that he was capable of being out on his own and was a responsible member of society.

Why is the Parole Board even in a position to release those if they present a risk? That is exactly what the motion is about. Let us put a mechanism in place so the Parole Board does not feel obligated to release people to continue to put Canadians at risk. That is what this is all about. I cannot believe anybody in the House would oppose that position.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, my thoughts are with the victim and her family. This was a terrible event and we need to ensure that it never happens again.

Violence against women is a problem that needs to be tackled seriously and it is a problem that was not tackled by the previous Conservative government and has not been tackled adequately by the current Liberal government.

The misogyny at the root of this event is apparent in the act itself, in the board's decision and in the laws that prevent sex workers from taking measures that would keep them safe.

Do the Conservatives agree that the risks for violence against women and sex worker rights are explicit factors to be considered in this study?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, we need to focus specifically on this issue. There are many factors that we can study but we need to really focus on what we need to fix in the Parole Board and the parole system in this country.

Any time that a parole board feels obligated or feels pressured by a government to release more people to reduce the pressure on our prison system, it is taking risks. Putting people who have not served their time, who are not safe to be in our communities, who have demonstrated they have not been rehabilitated to be in our communities is a risk. Why are we even having this conversation?

I believe in rehabilitation. The purpose of our correctional system is to rehabilitate. If someone is not rehabilitated, that individual should not be released back into our society to put women, children, anyone at risk, and that is happening. That is what we have to fix.

● (1040)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to extend my condolences to the family for this real tragedy.

There is a lot in the text of the motion that I would be willing to support. What concerns me about the comments of the member opposite is that he said “fresh and untrained” individuals are appointed. My concern is that the language in the motion is really pointed towards trying to take away the credibility of the people who are being appointed to these boards. I just want to be sure that the member opposite is not suggesting that the people who are appointed do not have the qualifications to be there.

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, that is the crux of the matter here.

Multitudes of long-serving Parole Board members were replaced and new appointments were made by the Liberal government in 2017. It is the examination of that appointment process that absolutely needs to occur to make sure that those who are appointed to positions of this kind of responsibility are qualified to be there. We do not know what happened. We do not know how it happened. That is what the purpose of the motion is about.

Canadians need confidence in our total justice system, front end, middle and back. We need to ensure that we instill that confidence by identifying what processes are in place to nominate people to these boards.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to join all hon. members of the House in expressing my sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Marylène Levesque, who was killed in cold blood by a coward in my Quebec City riding.

We are all deeply saddened and outraged by this tragedy. Such a tragedy would be shocking no matter the circumstances, but this one is even more so because the system that was supposed to protect Marylène Levesque and the public failed. This unspeakable tragedy has shaken the entire country, Quebec and especially my community. We must shed light on the events that led to this tragedy.

An investigation is crucial to understanding what happened, identifying those responsible and making the changes that will ensure this never happens again. Two investigations are already under way. The Quebec City police department is conducting a criminal investigation, and the Correctional Service of Canada, or CSC, and the Parole Board of Canada have convened a board of investigation.

The board was created under section 20 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. It is made up of five people, including two co-chairs who do not work for either of the two organizations involved. The government expects this board to complete its work as quickly as possible. Its findings will be made public and will help us understand where failures have occurred, whether at the Parole Board or CSC. These findings will be critical.

Our government also agrees that this matter should be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security for study, as prescribed in today's motion. We believe that these investigations and this study will arrive at the necessary conclusions to

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ensure that such a tragedy never happens again. The facts will help us achieve that, so I think it is important that we return to the facts.

The Parole Board of Canada did not approve giving the offender in question, Mr. Gallese, permission to visit massage parlours. When the Parole Board learned that correctional officers were allowing that to happen, it immediately issued an order in September 2019 for it to stop. The investigation will determine whether Mr. Gallese's case managers complied with that directive, and if that is not the case, why not. Meanwhile, I can assure the House and all members that the officers in question are no longer supervising any offenders.

One way or another, it seems clear to me that serious mistakes and failures were allowed to occur in this case. It is completely unacceptable and inappropriate for a correctional officer to include visits to massage parlours in an offender's plan, especially knowing Mr. Gallese's criminal history. It is therefore important that a thorough investigation cast light on the circumstances that led to this tragedy.

Furthermore, I note that the Conservative Party and the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles are trying to use this case to prove that there is a systemic problem.

However, violent offences committed by people under community supervision are extremely rare in Canada, and they have become rarer in recent years. Over the past decade, 7,000 to 8,000 people were under some form of community supervision each year, including more than 1,000 offenders on day parole. However, in 2013 and 2014, there were only 17 convictions for violent offences committed by a person on day or full parole.

I would be wary of venturing down this road, but the Conservatives seem to be leading us there anyway. I will therefore remind the members that these data are from the time when Mr. Harper's government had been in power for nearly a decade.

By comparison, in 2017-18, just five violent incidents were committed by people on day or full parole. That does not mean the system did not fail in the case of Marylène Levesque. It does not mean there is no need to fully explore the circumstances that led to this tragedy. However, when we are analyzing the correctional system as a whole, those are the numbers we need to bear in mind.

We should also bear these numbers in mind when talking about appointments to the Parole Board of Canada, whose members are highly qualified. Many things have been said on this subject, but of the 78 current members, 36% have a background in corrections, 28% are from the legal community, 17% are from the public service, 15% are from education, and 10% are former police officers. These members have training in law, psychology, criminology and social work.

● (1045)

Once appointed, the new board members receive rigorous training in their regions and at the Parole Board's headquarters here in Ottawa. They are trained on risk assessment, interview techniques, hearing management and decision writing, and they learn to recognize specific factors that apply to certain types of offenders, such as abusers or persons with mental health issues.

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After this initial training, the new board members observe hearings. They are paired with more experienced board members and return for additional training if necessary. It is important to note that only when the regional vice-chairperson is satisfied that the new board members are ready to sit and conduct hearings are they allowed to make decisions. Only when the regional vice-chairperson believes they are ready can they assume their role as board members. The current vice-chairperson of the Quebec region was not only appointed by the Conservative government, but he is also a former Conservative candidate and assistant to former minister Jean-Pierre Blackburn.

It should also be noted that all board members receive annual training on risk assessment so that they can refine their skills and remain in a continuous learning mode.

I would like to once again remind members that no one can sit on the Parole Board without the approval of the regional vice-chairperson, who must be satisfied that each person has acquired the necessary skills and expertise to sit as a member of the Parole Board. The current regional vice-chairperson of Quebec is a former Conservative candidate appointed by the Conservative Party.

In fact, many members appointed by the Harper government had strong ties to the Conservative Party. I am not calling the qualifications or abilities of these individuals into question. I would rather not go there. However, I think it is important to respond when we hear the Conservatives, and the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles in particular, making false accusations about the appointment process and insinuating that there were partisan appointments.

I think it is interesting to note just how many Parole Board members who were appointed under the Conservative government were either party donors, Conservative candidates or Conservative ministerial aides. Nearly one-third of the individuals appointed to the Parole Board of Canada under Stephen Harper's government had very clear ties to the party. This was particularly true in Quebec. At the end of the Conservative reign, six of the nine full-time members were very clearly and very publicly known as Conservative Party supporters.

Yes, it is true that we put an end to the practice of partisan appointments to the Parole Board of Canada. We value expertise, experience and competence. These qualities are crucial because the work of a board member is both highly demanding and highly important.

Setting aside the board members themselves, it is important to remember what criteria they use to evaluate a parole application. They consider the following factors: the reasons and recommendations of the sentencing judge; the nature and gravity of the offence; the offender's degree of responsibility; the information obtained during the trial; and the information obtained from the victims, offenders and correctional authorities. The board members must prioritize public safety, bearing in mind that it would undermine public safety if all offenders were released at the end of their sentence with no support, monitoring or conditions.

It should be noted that the criteria I just listed have not changed in years. They are the same ones that existed under the former gov-

ernment, and they have not changed since we were elected. There has been no change in the criteria, and they are the criteria that guide board members in making decisions about day parole or full parole.

Public safety is the primary objective of the entire correctional and parole system. Public safety is also the primary responsibility of any government. For the past five years, our government has focused on implementing measures to address gender-based violence, which is particularly relevant in this case involving the tragic death of a young woman.

I urge all members to support our strategy to prevent and address gender-based violence. Our strategy would implement preventive measures, support survivors and facilitate knowledge building and sharing. I urge my colleagues to support increasing legal assistance for victims of workplace sexual harassment. I urge them to support increasing funding for judicial education, ethics and conduct in cases of gender-based violence, sexual assault and family violence. I urge them to support funding for preventing teen dating violence, combatting bullying and addressing sexual violence at post-secondary institutions.

I know that every single one of us wants our communities and our society to be safer.

• (1050)

We want women like Marylène Levesque to never again find themselves in vulnerable situations and to have the resources and support they need.

To make that happen, it is essential that we shed light on what happened in this tragic case, where a young woman from our region found herself in an extremely vulnerable situation with a man who should never have been with her.

Our government and I agree that the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security should examine this issue and shed light on it, along with the board of investigation of the Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board of Canada.

I think the indictment of the Parole Board of Canada's decision is akin to an indictment of a quasi-judicial body. That is why it is important to tread very carefully.

However, in this case, it is clear that the Correctional Service officer who included a visit to massage parlours in his plan acted completely inappropriately, which is why there must be an inquiry, both by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security and the board of investigation that our government has tasked with reviewing all the facts and circumstances at every step of the decision in this case. We must draw the necessary conclusions to prevent a tragedy like the one in Quebec City from happening again. We owe it to the victim and her family. It is in the best interests of the country that we arrive at the necessary findings to prevent this from happening again.

Business of Supply

Since this is a very sensitive discussion, I would urge all members to exercise restraint in light of the tragedy that has led to this debate.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Louis-Hébert.

I recognize that this is a very delicate matter and that it would be best to exercise caution. At the same time, though, we are here to speak the truth.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety nevertheless brought politics into it when he compared the Conservatives' political appointments to the Liberals'.

I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary if he recognizes that, between 2007 and 2015, the recommendations came from Correctional Service Canada. They were obviously approved by the government, but the process was done by the Correctional Service. In 2015, the government purged the board of its old members, whose contracts were not renewed because they were Conservatives or because the government did not want to risk having Conservatives around, and returned to a system of Privy Council Office political appointments. Can the member for Louis-Hébert confirm this?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, when the Conservatives were in office, the recommendations came from the Parole Board, and the Conservative minister made the decision. Given the appointments made under the former government, it is obvious that membership in the Conservative Party was a criterion that was viewed very favourably by the Conservative minister at the time. By way of evidence, six of the nine Parole Board members had very close ties to the Conservative Party. They were former candidates or major donors. We put an end to the practice of partisan appointments. It is true that the process has changed. The Parole Board is still involved, as is the Minister of Public Safety, but the process is much more open.

We tried to ensure that the Parole Board achieved gender parity, which it has. That was not the case when the Conservatives were in office.

We ensured that members continue to receive proper training, that new members are supervised by experienced members, including the regional vice-chair who was appointed by the Harper government at the time, and that members are still mentored to ensure that anyone who sits on the Parole Board has the skills they need to do so.

That does not take away from the need to investigate the actions and decisions of members or of the correctional officers who were supposed to manage this case.

• (1055)

[English]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a very terrible story and I think all of us in the House want to find a solution so that this never happens again in an investigation.

One of the things the member mentioned in his speech was that the Conservatives recommended their people, but in 2017, the gov-

ernment was warned. As the CBC notes, two former Parole Board officers warned the government that “changes to the way board members were nominated could lead to inexperienced members making 'dangerous' decisions.”

In Quebec, 14 of 16 members were not reappointed, leading to a lapse in the usual practice of pairing new members with experienced members.

Do you think we should have a review of the process that is actually happening? Maybe we made a mistake. Maybe we should not have so many inexperienced people and should not try to pair them up with experienced ones. At least it is a constructive idea, and I think it is the right idea to make sure we have done the right thing.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that I am not going to give him my point of view, so I would ask him to address questions to the Chair and not to the individual members.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, it is important, as we go through this debate today, that we elevate ourselves above partisan politics and indeed look at the best ways to avoid a tragedy like this occurring in the future.

To the point on the nomination of commissioners, it is important to note that the training has remained very rigorous and that any new commissioner is supervised by commissioners with more experience and by the regional vice-president, who has to assess their capacity to sit on the Parole Board and make sure that at any given time they have the skills, expertise and capacities to render decisions. If the regional vice-president is not satisfied that a commissioner has that expertise, a commissioner cannot sit and render a decision on the Parole Board. That is fundamental to the training system and the ongoing training that commissioners undergo.

This does not take away from the fact that in this specific case the system failed Marylène Levesque, and we need to shed light on the circumstances that led to this tragedy. That is fundamental.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a shame that the official opposition is politicizing the tragic loss of this young woman's life.

Every year, 7,000 to 8,000 people live in the community under conditional release. In 2013-14, 17 of them were convicted of a violent offence while they were out. In 2017-18, there were five. One is too many, but the fact is that this is not an endemic problem in our community. It is something the Parole Board manages quite well.

Business of Supply

Could the parliamentary secretary speak to the importance of the independence of the Parole Board and the changes we made to the appointment process to ensure that the Parole Board is independent and is making decisions based on facts, not on emotion like the opposition is trying to have us do right now?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, I think my esteemed colleague is highlighting one of the problems with the motion we are debating today, namely the fact that it calls on us to condemn an administrative tribunal that is part of the justice system. That is a risky thing to do, and I think that we as parliamentarians should be careful before we start indicting quasi-judicial bodies like the Parole Board of Canada.

As far as appointments are concerned, it is true that we wanted to put an end to partisan appointments. When we look at the background of current board members, we can see that their education and professional experience have given them the necessary skills to perform their duties. Their training remains very rigorous.

This morning I heard Conservative members talk about the workload of correctional officers. I think it is important to remember that we reinvested \$500 million in correctional services, while the Conservatives cut \$850 million. I think it is also important to remember that these cuts had repercussions on the quality of analysis and on the time correctional officers can devote to each case.

• (1100)

[English]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, this issue is more pertinent to my riding than to any other place in the country. In Abbotsford, in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, there is Pacific Institution, Mission Institution, Matsqui Institution, Mountain Institution, an indigenous healing lodge and the Fraser Valley Institution for Women.

At one of the first meetings I ever had, a number of parole officers came to my riding office and said that the crimes committed by people on day parole are not being reported. Therefore, I would challenge the parliamentary secretary to come to my riding and meet with the people on the ground.

In British Columbia, as we all know, it is not our police officers but our Crown prosecutors who lay charges. Those Crown prosecutors are not reporting the incidence of crimes committed by people on parole and the crimes they are committing.

People are seriously concerned about public safety, so let us work together. Come to my riding and see what is going on. I want you to hear it directly from the people.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would love to come to the member's riding, but I would ask the member to address the questions and comments to the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, my colleague is raising an important issue, so I would be more than happy to sit down with him to hear him out on what he has heard.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, my thoughts go out to the family and friends of the victim here. I understand that in this case, there is some extreme misogyny. This speaks to the violence against women in society and the need to protect women, especially sex workers.

My question for the hon. member is about the process of appointment. You were talking about the politicization of these appointees. Would it not be better to depoliticize this with an expert panel that could come together to make these appointments so that this is not part of the political system?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, we included an indigenous elder and the Parole Board of Canada in the appointment process. The Parole Board submits its recommendations to the Minister of Public Safety. If you look at the backgrounds of the board members, especially in Quebec, which was my main focus, you can see that the educational and professional experience of these members justify their appointment. The training is thorough.

We did indeed seek greater diversity. The Parole Board of Canada members at the time were almost all men. Now, there is greater parity among the full-time board members in Quebec. We put an end to the practice of partisan appointments, which appears to have essentially been a prerequisite under the previous government. We have clearly made some changes, and the process can certainly be improved. We are open to suggestions.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I did not want to interrupt him, but I do want to remind the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, and he is not the only one who has done this today, that he is to address questions and comments to the Chair and not to individual members.

[Translation]

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Rivière-du-Nord. With his expertise in law, he will be able to probe into the specific details of the case that brings us here today.

Today's motion is a particularly sensitive matter, because it is about the death of a young woman. This woman was very close to my own age, and her death could have been prevented.

Business of Supply

I am speaking as the new Bloc Québécois critic for public safety and emergency preparedness. I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Bloc Québécois regarding the security and protection of Quebecers and Canadians alike. Like my colleague from Charlebourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, I find this case totally incomprehensible, especially since it is about violence against a woman, committed by a killer whose record was well known.

I am speaking today to make sure that murders like the one committed under the circumstances that led to the death of Marylène Levesque never happen again. Today, the Bloc Québécois will be supporting the Conservative Party's motion, the first point of which condemns the actions of the Parole Board of Canada. As we know, those actions led to the horrific death of a 22-year-old woman last month. This young woman was murdered by an offender who was out on day parole.

When it comes to justice, one must always be careful about criticizing decisions and policies. It is important to really understand the procedures, the laws and, most of all, the unique features of each case. The reason we are supporting this motion today is that we want to understand why the laws were not applied properly and why the procedures were not followed. The murder of Marylène Levesque could and should have been prevented.

We are not challenging the whole notion of rehabilitation. The purpose of putting an inmate who was behind bars for years on supervised parole is to rehabilitate him. In my opinion, supervised parole does not mean allowing an inmate to obtain services to satisfy his sexual needs. It is both unacceptable and in violation of the Criminal Code. In this particular case, it is clear that parole officers had information that could have prevented this murder.

First of all, the inmate could have been under closer supervision before the murder because he had allegedly violated his parole conditions previously. Second, officials could certainly have forbidden him from contacting Marylène Levesque as he did, because she was a sex worker. That seems like a logical approach to me.

I will repeat that we must be prudent when commenting on legal processes or decisions. Generally, we do not know all the facts. In the case of the murder of Ms. Levesque, the facts indicate a serious failure to comply with regulations and even federal laws governing justice and public safety. It is outrageous and even mind-boggling that the board gave the accused permission to commit a crime, that is to use the services of a prostitute with the complicity of the system that was to ensure the protection of his victim. Quebec's justice and law enforcement authorities have spoken out about this.

Quebec City police chief Robert Pigeon condemned the Parole Board decision that let an offender commit another crime, that is to see prostitutes. I will quote Mr. Pigeon: "How can someone on parole, on day parole, obtain sexual services for consideration? That is a crime under the Criminal Code."

The chief also raised the issue of how people are chosen to sit on the various committees. We in the Bloc Québécois would also like to know. There have also been many reactions in the National Assembly. The justice minister, Sonia LeBel, like everyone else, is demanding explanations from Canada's Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, particularly regarding the reasons that led

to Mr. Gallese's day parole, given his history of violence against women.

Parti Québécois member Véronique Hivon, true to form in such cases, is asking for a serious analysis of the situation and asking some vital questions. Is it a lack of training, a lack of information or a lack of analytical tools? Was it the system that failed? Personally, I think so. The system has failed. It failed Marylène Levesque, and it failed all of us.

The Auditor General of Canada produced a report in 2018, in which he stated that, because of a lack of resources, the Correctional Service of Canada could not ensure inmates' successful transition from custody to day parole, increasing the risk of reoffending.

Here we have proof that the Correctional Service of Canada is not adequately managing offenders under supervision in the community. It is completely unacceptable.

• (1105)

If we want our rehabilitation programs to work properly, they need to be appropriately resourced. The lack of resources had already been raised by the Auditor General. Today, the government is forced to answer the questions we are all asking ourselves, namely, what it has or has not done to fix the problem. What is most deplorable is that it took the murder of a 22-year-old woman to raise these questions.

The Bloc Québécois will also support this motion because it calls on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to conduct hearings into this matter.

The Minister of Public Safety may well have requested an internal investigation, but this means that it will be conducted by Correctional Service Canada and the Parole Board of Canada, the two agencies involved in this case. In my opinion, this kind of internal justice is wrong-headed, hence the need for an external investigation. Jean-Claude Boyer, a former member of the Parole Board of Canada, also believes that the investigation should be conducted externally, and independently. I would like to reiterate that this is entirely reasonable and necessary.

The Bloc Québécois will also support this motion because it calls for a review of the changes to the Parole Board of Canada nomination process made by the Liberals in 2017.

Business of Supply

According to a survey conducted by the Parole Board in May 2019, 70% of parole officers said that they were not able to do their work properly or to properly protect the public. We are talking here about the safety of people we know, people in all of the regions of Quebec and Canada. In November 2018, the Auditor General of Canada came to a similar conclusion regarding offenders supervised in the community. How is it that nothing has been done since 2018?

Former Parole Board member Dave Blackburn expressed concerns about the new member appointment process established in 2017. He said, and I quote: “That year, the...government changed the member renewal process. Members who had already been appointed to the Parole Board had to go through the same appointment process as new candidates.”

What we understand from that is that, as a result of the new process, most experienced members did not have their mandates renewed. We can already see a number of problems there.

In closing, the Bloc Québécois will support this motion so that we can get to the bottom of the events that led to this murder, which, I repeat, could have and should have been avoided.

As a woman, as a Quebecker and as the Bloc Québécois critic for public safety and emergency preparedness, I want to offer my sincere condolences to Marylène Levesque's family. I would also like to tell them that we will do everything in our power to get to the bottom of what happened in order to honour Marylène's memory and ensure the safety of women in Quebec and Canada.

The goal is obviously to implement real measures to prevent any other such tragedies from happening in the future. The Bloc Québécois wants people to have confidence in their justice system, but that confidence has been seriously undermined.

• (1110)

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, our justice system is broken. Our Crown prosecutors do not lay charges when they should. Our parole officers do not have resources. They are losing hope. Criminals on day parole have no incentive to follow their conditions.

What solutions does the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia have to improve the system we have in Canada and Quebec?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I think a good start would be for all of us to sit down together to determine what led to this situation. We can all agree that it must never happen again. An external investigation would solve many problems, and outside scrutiny of the situation could be a good place to start.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we have this debate throughout the day, it is important to recognize that there are actions being taken. These were refer-

enced by the parliamentary secretary. There is criminal action being taken, in terms of an investigation. There is also an inquiry within the Parole Board. This is very encouraging to see, and I suspect we will get a better understanding of this in the coming days and weeks.

I want to add my voice to those of others and extend my condolences to the family and friends of the victim.

This was more of a comment than a question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comment.

I do not understand why we had to wait for something like this to occur before asking the necessary questions. There was evidence in 2017, 2018 and 2019 that something was not working properly. These circumstances had to arise, a young woman had to be killed, for something to be done. In my view, something should have been done a long time ago.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is always a tricky business when Parliament or any legislature tries to take steps to become involved in the judicial system. I have been a member on a couple of administrative tribunals in British Columbia, and we were always concerned when the government openly questioned some of our findings. This is such an egregious matter that I think it is a proper step for us.

I wonder if the member would comment a bit more on what steps we might take. What are the precise things she would want to fix? We heard that we need an external inquiry, but she brought up some very serious concerns over what the Parole Board was allowing this person to do, and I wanted to give her that extra opportunity.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, as I said, one must always be careful when commenting on this kind of situation, but sometimes we have no choice.

The fact that this man was allowed to see prostitutes and access such services is unacceptable. This means that the system knew what was going on. The first time I heard about this case, I thought his visits must have been happening in secret and that the officials must not have been aware of the situation. On the contrary, it had been approved. There is something wrong with the system.

We absolutely must look into this, and it begins with an external investigation and hearings to understand how that organization operates internally and determine how the system failed.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will not reiterate what others have said, but I can confirm that Bloc Québécois members are shocked by these events.

This was not an isolated incident for this individual. In 1988, he assaulted the mother of his children, Joanne Lafrance. In 2004, he killed his partner, Chantal Deschênes. There is a well-established history of such behaviour. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole for 15 years. In the fall of 2019, he was let out on day parole. According to his parole officer, he was granted day parole so he could meet women to satisfy his sexual needs.

What kind of society lets a notorious repeat sexual offender out on parole so he can meet his sexual needs? Apparently that is a social reintegration strategy. I can hardly believe it. That kind of approach just does not compute.

Clearly, the motion before us is an important one. The process needs to be reviewed. We need to start by condemning the Parole Board's decision. I think that goes without saying; no need to belabour the point. Next, we have to hold hearings to find out if any changes need to be made.

I would point out that the union president and the president of the Association des services de réhabilitation sociale du Québec say that this is an unusual decision. They must not have seen this very often to describe it as unusual. The Parole Board of Canada itself is asking for a review of the analysis grid. I think we need to take this seriously. As a society, we cannot accept situations like this.

We offer our condolences to the victim's family and to the families of all the other victims. However, at some point we have to assume our responsibilities. I think it is time to review this process.

If Parole Board of Canada board members need more training then let's provide that training. If we need to appoint new members, then let's do that. If we need to change the selection criteria for members of the Parole Board of Canada, then let's do that. We have to start with an inquiry to determine what happened and ensure that it does not happen again because this situation is unacceptable.

For all these reasons and those raised by my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this motion and offers its deepest condolences to the families of this individual's victims.

[English]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, sitting in this place listening to debate today, I think the biggest travesty of all is that two lives have been lost. It is unfortunate and devastating that a second person had to lose her life for this issue to be looked at.

I know, and I have heard and agree, that the process needs to be changed. Something needs to be changed. It is a great idea for the committee to study this and look at it to see, somewhat from an external point of view, what could be changed.

I have heard that the Parole Board should have an external review. I understand it is having an internal review, but I do not really understand how it can investigate itself without bias and make appropriate, real, hard, tangible suggestions for change.

Could the member comment on an external review of the Parole Board, but also on what type of processes could be suggested so that this does not happen again?

Business of Supply

• (1120)

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, there should be an external review of the nomination process. In fact, perhaps the review should extend to the entire structure of the Parole Board. In my opinion, it is a good idea to have the review led by an external body. Sometimes, an internal committee may have a bias based on its experience and ways of doing things in past years. It is a good idea for people from outside the organization to study the situation in order to shake things up, as we say.

However, for the time being, I am not in a position to say what proposals might come out of this review. I cannot presume what conclusions the auditors will arrive at. I know that, in 2018, the Auditor General of Canada stated that the situation at the Parole Board was untenable, which certainly suggests this is nothing new.

In November 2018, the Auditor General of Canada stated that there was a problem at the Parole Board. In May 2019, a survey conducted by the board indicated that 70% of parole officers stated that they were unable to do their job. That is what the parole officers said in May 2019 and the Auditor General, in November 2018—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I must interrupt the member because his time has expired.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

[English]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, this question relates to public safety and the people housed in our correctional facilities in Canada.

Does the Bloc Québécois have a position on the ill-advised prison needle exchange put forward by the Liberal government? Is the Bloc Québécois in support of giving inmates needles to do illegal drugs in our federal institutions?

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, there is a clear need to tighten the parole assessment processes.

We in the Bloc Québécois support any measure that would assist in the reintegration of offenders. If we can help inmates to reintegrate into society, we are not against that.

In all areas, we must be vigilant and try to reintegrate people who have gone off the beaten path or broken the rules that we have set for ourselves in society. Today, I would like to focus my attention on the specific issue of releasing offenders on parole before the end of their sentence in the clear absence of due diligence.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, as I begin, I would like to beg the indulgence of the House for one moment to mention the tragic loss of life in my riding Friday night in the community of Sooke, where flooding appears to have taken the lives of Cory Mills, Eric Blackmore and A.J. Jensen. We will learn more about the details of this incident as time goes on, but I believe we also need to look into the larger context of climate change, more severe storms, clear-cut logging and all of these things contributing to more severe flooding in my riding. We want to see if there was a connection to that loss of life.

Many volunteers came out to search when these young men went missing on Friday night, which is a tribute to the strength of volunteerism in the community of Sooke, and I thank all of those volunteers who helped in the search.

Turning to the question before us this morning, I will begin by expressing my condolences to the family and friends of Marylène Levesque for this loss, which is a loss not only to them but to all Canadians.

The NDP will be supporting the motion put forward by the Conservatives today, because obviously we need an investigation as to how something like this could happen in Canada. This tragic incident raises questions about the specific decisions of the Parole Board and parole officers in this case. These are important questions, because our parole system, by and large, serves the public well and helps to guarantee public safety in this country. However, when something clearly goes so far off the rails as to result in a tragic incident such as this, we have to have answers about what happened in our system.

How could this have been allowed to happen when the perpetrator had a previous conviction for the murder of his wife and was under supervision? How in the world did we get to a situation of another young woman losing her life at the hands of the same person for whom Canadians had taken responsibility, through our parole system, and who had been guaranteed to the public would be safe from committing further violence and further actions? These are indeed important questions.

However, the motion perhaps does not go far enough in that it does not really tackle those larger questions about the role of gender-based violence in Canadian society, about how we value women's lives and how we sometimes do not value women's lives to the extent that we should. In particular, when it comes to incidents of intimate partner violence, somehow this is seen as a lesser form of violence and the perpetrator of violence on their partner is somehow seen as less of a threat to Canadian society as a whole than are other violent criminals. This simply makes no sense to me, but it is clearly a factor involved in this case.

We also have to ask ourselves how much we value all women's lives, including the lives of sex workers.

The Parole Board and the parole officers clearly played a role in perpetuating these problematic attitudes about women and about violence toward women in our society, so yes, I support this motion, because we need to look closely at who is being appointed to the Parole Board.

Do we have a sufficient number of women on the Parole Board to help evaluate risk and set policies to evaluate risk? Are those people being appointed to parole boards for the right reasons? The Conservatives have raised this question. Parole Board appointments should not be a question of patronage, but a question of appointing people who represent the community and the community's values, people who can help set the very important policies that prevent innocent lives from being lost.

We also need to look at the question of the training that we provide to Parole Board members. Are we making sure that they are adequately trained in gender-based violence? Are we making sure that they are adequately trained in the rights and responsibilities that they have as Parole Board members and will not perpetuate these attitudes that sometimes value certain women's lives less than other lives in our society?

Let me talk a little more about the specifics of this incident.

There is the question we need to ask about how risk was evaluated. I will take a moment to read what was said by a UBC law professor, Isabel Grant, who I think raises some very important questions. She said:

I think that [the case] really shows the degree to which we do privilege male entitlement to women's bodies over the safety of women. I think it reflects, too, this idea that men who killed their girlfriends or wives or intimate partners don't present as much of a threat to the public as other men.

• (1125)

Professor Grant went on to say, "And I think that's problematic, and it also shows how we see the safety of women, particularly the most marginalized women, and how little priority we give it," meaning how little priority we give their safety.

We need to have this inquiry to ask those questions about risk evaluation and, in particular, how we evaluate the risk of men who have perpetrated violence on women in the past.

Then there is this whole concept that seems to have invaded this case, where the perpetrator had sexual needs that needed to be satisfied. I cannot imagine what this discussion is doing in a question of parole and risk. There is no right of men to have their sexual needs satisfied by women. No such thing exists. I cannot imagine how this became a subject of discussion on a perpetrator about whom the Parole Board had already said was not ready for relationships with women. However, it was suggesting that this person should visit sex workers for sex, as if this were not some kind of a relationship with a woman, for which he would obviously and clearly also not be ready. We have to look at specific cases and ask those tough questions of what attitudes lie behind these kinds of decisions.

Then there is the very problematic question to ask parole officers and parole boards. Since, under our current law, seeking sexual services from sex workers and paying for those services is illegal, are we really talking about a parole system that has suggested a perpetrator on parole should commit an illegal act? By its nature, the commission of that illegal act, should have cancelled his parole and returned him to custody. Are we really talking about the situation where somebody was, from within the system, advising a perpetrator to commit an illegal act? I would like an answer to that. I think all Canadians would like an answer to that very specific question.

That is why the NDP will support the Conservative motion. On those narrow questions, we have some very important answers to get and when we get those answers, we have to look very seriously at changes in policies that allowed these kinds of things to happen.

When we come to the broader context, we have to ask ourselves about a corrections system that had a perpetrator in custody for 15 years and failed to rehabilitate him. We all know there are challenges in our corrections system with lack of resources. We all know there are challenges raised by a very large number of people in our corrections system about offenders who have mental health and addiction problems. These are real challenges that our system has to face.

However, I would submit there are some cases where rehabilitation will fail and when that rehabilitation fails, we have a responsibility in our corrections system to keep the person in custody or to carefully supervise the individual's release. That broader question is raised again about how successful we are at rehabilitation and in the cases of violence against women especially, how seriously do we take the failure to rehabilitate men.

In the broader context of the safety of sex workers, there is what I call a very interesting twist, and I do not really like the tone of that word, in this case. Clearly the perpetrator had visited this massage parlour before, which we know from many reports. He had been banned because of his violence toward the women who worked in that parlour. If this were a normal place of work at which violence occurred, it would have been reported to the police and would have resulted in the revocation of his parole. However, under the current legislation, a massage parlour is illegal. Therefore, it is illegal to provide a safe place for sex work to take place. We therefore have the cruel irony that the massage parlour could not report this person to the police without the risk of shutting down the safe place that had been established for sex work to take place.

Therefore, now we are into the broader question of our laws on sex work in Canada. Members in the House will know, as I have spoken on this many times, that I have worked with sex workers in my riding on a harm reduction strategy, not a judgment strategy, and a rights-based strategy, not a rescue-based strategy. It is very important that we look at this case as an example of what is wrong with our current restrictive laws on sex work. Many people say that we only criminalize the johns. That is not actually true. This is not what happened in the legislation.

• (1130)

We criminalize all kinds of things around sex work that makes sex work more dangerous. We criminalize the safe places for it to take place, such as brothels or massage parlours. Those really are

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safe places for women to perform sex work. We criminalize hiring security to provide safety, as that would be under the provision that someone is somehow profiting from sex work while being hired to provide security.

I could go on with a list of things that we criminalize all the way around sex work. Each and every one of those provisions makes sex work more dangerous for the women involved.

I have the privilege of having the PEERS sex worker drop-in centre in my riding. Also, when I was on council, it was in my municipality. I learned from meeting with sex workers in my riding and from the staff at the PEERS centre what sex workers' organizations can do when they are empowered to provide safety to their members.

Rather than criminalizing sex work, I would like to see us take a harm reduction strategy that empowers sex worker organizations. What do I mean by that? It is more than just a nice phrase. It means, who provides "bad date lists", as they are called? Who keeps track of the men who are violent toward sex workers? Sex worker organizations have that information. One of the functions they perform in every local venue is to make women who are involved in sex work aware of those men who are violent and dangerous. We need to support sex workers in providing the service. Unfortunately, we cannot involve the police in that at this time, because of the criminalization of all these pieces around sex work.

The PEERS drop-in centre in my riding provides many social services for women in the sex trade who are faced with housing and child care crises and who face all the same challenges that other workers face in our society. Once again, the key to all those services is not judgment about why women are in sex work, not judgment about whether sex work is a good or a bad thing, but how we can make lives better and safer for those who are already involved in sex work.

We have a charity based in Victoria called "HeroWork". HeroWork provides volunteers to help renovate the premises of community social service organizations. Most members of Parliament will be quite aware that one of the problems our charities have is that their infrastructure is quite old and decrepit. Their workplaces are not very good places to work. Many of them are mould infested and have other real health challenges.

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HeroWork selected as one of its projects the renovation of the PEERS drop-in centre. It mobilized literally hundreds of volunteers around the community to go in and makeover the drop-in centre and to make it a more welcoming and supportive place, including creating a community kitchen so it could provide meals, showers and other services to those who were involved in sex work in my community.

The interesting thing we found was that the project of renovating the drop-in centre brought volunteers from all over the community, who may not have otherwise gotten to know sex workers. This played a large role in changing their attitudes toward what happens in sex work in my community.

In this debate, it is important that we extend our thinking to whether we have taken the right approach to harm reduction in sex work and how that connects directly to the incident we have in front of us, which caused the loss of life. Many hundreds of sex workers have lost their lives in the country.

It beggars belief that those involved in our parole and corrections system could think that sending a person, who has a record of violence with women, to the most vulnerable women in our society and not expect a bad and tragic outcome, like the one that occurred in Quebec City.

First, we need to look at the specific decisions that were taken by the Parole Board in its review of the actions of the parole officer. Again, after teaching criminal justice for 20 years and having a federal prison in my riding, I know that most of the time this system does very good work on behalf of all Canadians. Let us look at the specific decision and figure out what went wrong.

• (1135)

Second, I am supporting the motion, but I would like to see us expand the terms of reference, so we think about those larger issues in our society of gender-based violence, intimate partner violence and the safety of sex workers. When we have taken a look at those issues, then we will have a responsibility to act, as legislators in the House, to make this a better and safer Canada for all women, including sex workers.

• (1140)

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): I am impressed with the context with which you approached some of these issues. From your background and your perspective—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind members to address the questions and comments to the Chair.

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, does the member believe the Liberals' internal review will actually accomplish what this motion sets out to do, and what he has suggested could maybe be accomplished, or does it need a more comprehensive look at the details that have more of a long-term impact on what Canadians really expect from a justice system?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, there is no doubt about the fact that an incident like this certainly should cause an internal review. When things go this wrong, there must be an internal review. Is that internal review enough? No. For that reason, the New Democrats are supporting the motion before the House today.

As I said, it raises those narrow questions of how these decisions, which have driven the system off course so badly in this case, were made and whether there are systematic things we can do to change those. Those may involve better appointments to the Parole Board. They may involve better education of Parole Board members. They may involve specific decisions made by individuals within the system. We need to look at those.

Then we need to look at the larger questions of how we deal with violence against women, gender-based violence, in our society; how we deal with intimate partner violence; and how we ensure that all women, including sex workers, are safe in Canada.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for enlarging this debate. My hon. colleague in the Bloc Québécois did the same thing in her speech. We have had the opportunity today to really talk about gender-based violence, and I welcome that.

We have an organization in my riding of Châteauguay—Lacolle that does wonderful work. It is called Action sur la Violence et Intervention Familiale. Its members really work on anger management. They work with adolescent boys and men in managing behaviour. As well, they often work with people who are mandated by the courts.

Would the hon. member agree that this is an avenue worth exploring and supporting?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for pointing out the very important work that is often done at the community level, with very few resources, to try to address gender-based violence. There are those organizations in my riding as well. We need to see the federal government get behind the leadership that is already being provided at the community level in addressing gender-based violence.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was very thoughtful and I enjoyed quite a bit of what was said.

The question I have is this. Do we value women? I have heard over and over in the House, regarding this specific case, that sexual needs were put over the value of women. Why is this happening in society? Why was it suggested, for somebody who has a history of violence against women, that he should go to a sex worker and have his needs met? It is just absolutely appalling to me that this would be a suggestion.

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The member acknowledged that sometimes rehabilitation failed. Why was this not caught by the Parole Board? Why was there a suggestion to put the accused in a situation which could tempt him for violence against women? Besides training, as the member had mentioned on gender-based violence, what else could be done to fix the process or have women be valued in society?

• (1145)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, if the reports that the perpetrator's sexual needs were prioritized are in fact true, we need to have the internal investigation to find out how that could happen in this system. It is a very important and specific question that we need to get to the bottom of.

On the broader question of attitudes toward women, I want to emphasize that in this case we are dealing with one of the most marginalized groups of women, a woman who was a sex worker. However, whether we are talking about indigenous women and the missing and murdered indigenous women's inquiry or about injection drug users, who are also very marginalized, we often do not see the value of those Canadians in the same way we do for what the government likes to call the middle class.

For those who are not in that very straight and narrow category, we need to look very seriously at our attitudes toward them and consider re-evaluating our assignment of worth to individuals in our society. All Canadians have worth. All Canadians have value. All Canadians have families who are devastated by their losses.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for standing up for women's rights and sex worker rights.

Sex workers warned the government that the current sex work laws would result in more violence and put sex workers at risk. This tragic case could have been avoided if we did not allow discrimination and stigma to shape our policies.

Sex workers' rights are human rights. We criminalize the environments and the very things that would keep the workers safe, but then disregard their safety when a perpetrator's ongoing violence against women is not a reason to ensure the safety of women, all women.

My colleague mentioned that the perpetrator had been violent before at the massage parlour. However, because of the laws that criminalize the security and establishments that could keep sex workers safe, this was not able to be reported. Sex workers have said that they are the experts but that no one listens to them.

How would this event be different if we listened to sex workers, if we supported sex workers and their workplaces in reporting violence without repercussions? How would this event be different if we had a government that took violence against women seriously?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Victoria for her impassioned question, to which I think there is no easy or simple answer.

When we were passing the legislation to, what I call recriminalize sex work since the Supreme Court decriminalized it, if we had listened to sex workers and allowed them to have safe places to conduct their work, then it appears quite clear that this specific inci-

dent would not have happened. The violence that had been perpetrated against other sex workers would have been reported to the police, as it should be able to be reported, without repercussions on the sex workers or the place at which they carry on their work.

Therefore, because we did not listen and because we recriminalized sex work after the court decisions, we are placed in a situation where we are confronted with violence against women on a very regular basis, usually against those most marginalized, either by sex work as their primary occupation or by engaging in sex work in support of addictions or because they have no other alternatives. There is a whole variety of reasons that women end up in these situations, but we failed to listen to any of their voices and failed to keep them safe.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the iconic member for Cariboo—Prince George.

This is my first time rising in debate in the 43rd Parliament, so I would like to take a couple of moments to thank the residents of Edmonton West for honouring me with re-election. I am very proud to say that, according to the Library of Parliament, last election we received the most votes ever cast in a federal or provincial election within the city of Edmonton going back to Confederation. I want to thank the constituents of Edmonton West for putting their faith in me.

One of the issues we have in Alberta right now is the alienation caused by the government and also the fact that Liberals will not recognize or give proper representation to Alberta. Even though the Liberal in my riding, and I have to congratulate Kerrie Johnston who ran a fantastic campaign, received barely 20%, she actually received more votes than any single Liberal MP from Prince Edward Island. Here we have a Liberal who received very few votes in Alberta but who would have been elected in any one of the ridings in P.E.I. I hope along those lines we will address electorate representation or the lack thereof in Alberta in the coming years.

I want to thank my family, of course, for helping me out. I would not be here without them. My oldest son, Jensen, door knocked with me and helped out in Edmonton Centre, Edmonton Strathcona and Edmonton Mill Woods as well. My younger son, Parker, door knocked with me throughout the summer and helped out Edmonton Centre and also door knocked in Edmonton Strathcona. We have heard that cats have nine lives, but politicians who do not thank their spouses only have one life, so I am going to hang onto that and thank my wife, Sasha, for her support. I could not do anything, even get dressed, without her, so I thank her for all her support and love over the years.

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Victory has a thousand fathers and defeat has one orphan, so I want to thank some of the fathers who helped me out. There are too many to mention, but I want to highlight my friend, Tom, and of course, Bob and his wife, Bev, whose car I ran into during the election. Bev I called Barb for all these years by mistake. Kids from Parkland Immanuel Christian School, about 20 of them, came out and door knocked. I thank Frank and Margaret as well. These are just some of the people who helped me get here again.

We knocked on over 50,000 doors from the end of June right up to election day. We heard loud and clear from my constituents that they want us to work at getting our pipelines built, getting our energy workers back to work and making Alberta and the country strong again. I will continue to do that. Again, I thank the people of Edmonton West.

We are here to discuss the opposition motion regarding the Parole Board. First, I want to quickly go over the Gallese case and look at the history of what happened. Gallese, of course, was the gentleman who was a murderer and was allowed out to kill again by the Parole Board. In 1997, this gentleman was convicted of violence against a spouse, so this was not the first time. In 2004, he was convicted of killing his wife, first beating her with a hammer before stabbing her repeatedly. This is not a simple act of perhaps second-degree murder that could have been by accident. This man beat her with a hammer and then repeatedly stabbed her to death.

He was sentenced to 15 years with no parole. He was deemed a high risk to recommit violence against women. In 1997, he was convicted of beating a spouse, murdering a spouse and deemed a high risk to recommit. Somehow, a few years in, under the Liberal government, the risk assessment was reduced. The risk that he was going to repeat was reduced.

I have to ask why the Liberals are fighting our look into the circumstances that would allow this to happen. He was out on day parole and in September 2019 in his twice a year annual Parole Board review, the Parole Board heard that he had been visiting prostitutes in violation of his parole. The Parole Board was aware. Visiting prostitutes, according to the law, demonstrates elevated risk. He should have been thrown back in jail when the Parole Board found out.

Doing the right thing and putting him back in jail would have saved a life. Instead, the Parole Board merely said to him not to do it again. That was it. The Parole Board let him go and told him not to do it again. Two months later, he murdered Marylène Levesque, a young woman who died because of the Parole Board's incompetence.

• (1150)

I have to ask why the government is fighting this motion to look into the circumstances and the Parole Board's actions. We need to ensure this does not happen again. I do not blame the Liberal MPs for this happening, but the Parole Board needs a review.

What is stopping Parliament from reviewing the Parole Board process that led directly to this murder? If a man is unable to form a violence-free relationship with a woman, why in the world would it be okay for him to go out and have a relationship with a prostitute? Why do we value that lady's life less than someone else's life? Why

is it okay to put the sexual needs of a violent criminal ahead of innocent women?

Fourteen of the Liberal-appointed Parole Board members have less than three years' experience. Why are the patronage appointments more important than the safety of Canadians, the safety of women, the safety of marginalized women in the sex trade?

I am sure the Liberals just want a simple, quiet, internal review to cover up their patronage errors. Perhaps they want to throw the parole officer under the bus and put all the blame on that officer. Let us be clear that the Parole Board knew about this gentleman visiting prostitutes, the elevated risk and did nothing. Liberals want to ignore the problems existing within the Parole Board system.

My riding has the largest women's prison in western Canada, the Edmonton Institution for Women. I meet with the corrections officers and parole officers very often. We deal with problems that have not been addressed, safety with drug injections inside the prison and the segregation policy.

I also hear about the problems that parole officers and program officers are struggling with the caseload. They are pressured to get offenders out of the prison and onto the streets. The program to monitor and maintain progress with offenders has been weakened. There is weakened oversight to hold prisoners accountable. There is a push to get these offenders into halfway houses. The halfway houses have their uses, but we have to remember oversight and supervision of these prisoners in halfway houses is not 24 hours a day. It is severely reduced.

No speech I make in this House would ever occur without me referring to the departmental plan. I notice in the departmental plan for public safety under correctional services, over the next four years the government is planning to cut 4% of funding to the Parole Board.

Community supervision for the parole officers, without taking into account inflation, raises and cost increases, is soon to be cut by \$1 million. The workers are saying there is too much of a workload and the Liberals are still cutting it a further \$1 million.

Overall, corrections services are getting a 1% cut over a five-year period from the year the Liberals took over. If we read the departmental report, it is very fitting that the head of the Parole Board mentions in a report the dignity of offenders and better serving of offender groups, but she mentions victims just once.

As I go further into the departmental plan, there is another great one. The plan mentions the percentage of offenders on parole who are not convicted of an offence prior to their supervision period ending. I would think it would be 100%. The Liberals' goal is 4%, which is an increase in the amount of reoffending over the last four years.

The plan also mentions the percentage of offenders on parole who are not convicted of a violent offence during their supervision period. I would think 100% would be their goal, but it is not. The Liberals have shown a lower goal over the coming years of the number of people who are reoffending for violent crimes than past years.

It is very clear the Liberal program and the Parole Board need to be reviewed. The Parole Board needs to have an external and public review, and the review has to be transparent. An internal review the Liberals are pushing for will serve no one.

Innocent women have to be protected. Canadians have to be protected. The government should do the right thing and vote with the opposition on this motion.

• (1155)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the member's comment about thanking his spouse.

If we are going to talk about statistics, then let us be realistic. There are 7,000 to 8,000 people on conditional release every year. Under the Conservative government, in 2013-14, 17 were convicted of violent crimes. In 2017-18, there were five. Let us be realistic.

I think we would agree that the number should be zero on this. However, the fact is that the number was actually higher under the Conservative government than it was under our government in 2017-18.

I wonder if the hon. member could clarify those comments to reflect the fact that overall, communities are safe with parolees living in them and parole officers do a tremendous job in keeping communities safe.

• (1200)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I want to read right from the government's departmental report, signed off by former public safety minister Ralph Goodale.

In 2015-16, the overlap year between the Conservatives and the Liberals, the rate of convictions on prisoners out on supervision for offences resulting in death, so people out on parole who murder someone, for every thousand it was 0.48. When the Liberals took over government that number doubled. Their goal has actually increased to 0.64. I would be happy to table this for the member across the way to see what her own government has put in writing and tabled in the House.

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The truth is that under the Liberals, the number of deaths by people convicted of murder but out on parole has increased. It has gone from 0.48 for every thousand to double that the first full year they were in power, and their goal has increased. I do not know what the member is quoting, but the papers tabled in the House by her own government show otherwise.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to point out once again that I always perversely enjoy it when the Liberals and Conservatives argue about who does the worst job, but that is not what we are talking about here. We are talking about a very tragic incident that resulted in a loss of life that none of us want to see repeated.

I know the hon. member well and I respect him. Does he think the fact that the victim in this case was a sex worker is as important as the questions his party is raising around the conditional release system? I happen to believe the safety of sex workers and the operations of the Parole Board are equally important questions for us to look at. Does he share that opinion?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I will address the member's first comment. We can never criticize how the NDP does in power, because it has never been in power and never will be in power.

I agree with the member 100%. I am sure the member across the way does not see the victim as a sex worker. I am sure, like me, he sees that person as an innocent woman who did nothing wrong except be killed because of the failures of the Parole Board.

It does not matter what people do in their life. A sex worker is just as valued as any human being in our society. Whether she is a mother, a sister or a daughter, she is valued. They are all valued and they all must be protected equally.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the reminder to thank my spouse and I will do that more appropriately in an upcoming speech. As a new member, I take that advice seriously.

I have also heard the government's call to continue to campaign as a transparent government. As a new member to this chamber, I would ask my colleague to help me understand how an internal review would fulfill that goal of transparency. Is our motion not far more appropriate toward encouraging transparency?

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Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague's sentiment. This has to be an open and transparent review. We know full well that in an internal review the government is going to scapegoat the parole officer who was dealing with this, throw him under the bus and give a free pass to its patronage appointments to the Parole Board.

This has to be a complete, open and transparent review to ensure that we never again lose a sister, a mother, a daughter, a brother or anyone due to the incompetence of the Parole Board.

• (1205)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand today and speak to such an important matter. Today's motion is extremely important. It is calling for justice for Marylène Levesque.

I will be asking for justice for many victims of crime and violence as it pertains to my riding of Cariboo—Prince George. If we cannot be the voice for victims of violence and crime, who will be? In many cases their voices are silenced, as in the case of Marylène Levesque.

I have stood in this House time and again over the last five years and talked about cases such as Canada's youngest serial killer, Cody Legebokoff, who heinously murdered four young women in my riding: Jill Stuchenko, Cynthia Maas, Loren Leslie and Natasha Montgomery. Sadly, in the previous Parliament we would see the minister stand up and merely pay lip service.

I have been listening to this debate today and I am heartened to hear words about doing a full investigation into the incident of the heinous murder of Marylène Levesque.

Over the last five years, the previous minister could not even say the word "murder". It was a bad practice. How far have we fallen when discussing murder becomes a bad practice?

We have seen a convicted terrorist, one who waged war against Canadians and American soldiers, shamefully paid \$10 million.

We have seen a man who murdered an off-duty police officer in Nova Scotia claim he suffered from PTSD from committing that murder. He was then catapulted to the front of the line to receive services before our first responders, military members and veterans, with little action from our colleagues across the way.

Unfortunately, my riding of Cariboo—Prince George is not immune to this inaction. As I mentioned, Cody Legebokoff, who is Canada's youngest serial killer, brutally murdered four young women in 2009 and 2010. I will say their names again, because their names should be repeated time and again. They are Natasha Montgomery, Jill Stuchenko, Cynthia Maas and, Mr. Legebokoff's final victim, Loren Leslie, who was just 15.

He was convicted on all four counts of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison with no parole for 25 years. However, what we found out early last year was that he was transferred from a maximum-security prison to a medium-security prison just up the road from here. The Correctional Service of Canada's own words were that the transfer and redesignation of some of our most serious criminals is not an exact science.

The case we have before us today is about Marylène Levesque, the Parole Board and the instructions the parole officer gave her murderer. That is what leads us to the cause of our concern with Cody Legebokoff being transferred from a maximum-security to a medium-security prison. The families are wondering what is next. Will Cody Legebokoff be walking the streets?

B.C. Supreme Court Justice Glen Parrett decided that, given the sexual assaults committed as part of the murders and Legebokoff's apparent degradation of the victims' bodies, he was adding him to the national sex offender registry. In his decision to add Legebokoff to the national sex offender registry, Justice Parrett said that Legebokoff "lacks any shred of empathy or remorse" and "he should never be allowed to walk among us again."

The remains of one of his victims, Natasha Montgomery, have never been found. Mr. Legebokoff still continues to negotiate and uses that as a bargaining chip with the families in an effort to get favourable treatment while in prison.

• (1210)

Brendan Fitzpatrick was the RCMP E Division major crime section superintendent in charge of operations during Mr. Legebokoff's murder spree.

Mr. Fitzpatrick called it "absolutely unconscionable" that Cody Legebokoff was transferred from a maximum-security prison to medium-security prison.

He wrote to me early last year, and in his letter to me he said, "On behalf of all of Mr. Legebokoff's victims, their surviving families and the investigators whose blood sweat and tears went into the arrest and conviction of this individual, I reach out to you to bring this issue to the public's attention and demand answers of the Public Safety portfolio why this convicted killer is being given this generous benefit."

We challenged the minister of the day to please look into this. Again, Mr. Speaker, I stand before you and I challenge the minister of this day to look into this case, just as he has pledged to look into Marylène Levesque's case.

The government needs to account for why the victims' families were not consulted and why the police had no input into this placement. It needs to account for why the youngest serial murderer in Canadian history is provided the luxury of a new, less secure environment.

Another case that is just as recent is that of Fribjon Bjornson. Fribjon Bjornson was a young man who had just come in from a logging camp, cashed his cheque, went to party with some of his friends, as many do on Friday evenings and weekends, and ended up being murdered. He was decapitated. One of his murderers was James David Junior Charlie, and his first-degree murder conviction was recently overturned by B.C.'s highest court, citing an error by the trial judge.

Mrs. Bjornson is a friend of ours. She told me the whole family is devastated. Once again, victims' families are being victimized over and over again throughout the process. Where are the voices for the victims? Who is standing up for the victims?

Mrs. Bjornson told me that they knew there would be an appeal as there always is unless a plea deal is given. That is one of the reasons they agreed when a plea deal was offered to Wesley Duncan and Jesse Bird. They pleaded guilty to second-degree murder after hearing what happened to Frib during James Charlie's trial. Mrs. Bjornson was certain they would have been found guilty of first-degree murder.

She went on to say that as parents, waiting six years to find out the story is cruel and unusual punishment. Now eight years later, and this is just this past fall, they are faced with the dilemma of having to go through the whole trial again.

This government, and any government, needs to do more for victims and their families. Sadly, we just continue to get lip service.

We saw this in the case of young Tori Stafford when her murderer was given access to a healing lodge. I will go back and say this again: Healing lodges were not on trial there. It is the fact that a convicted murderer, an offender of one of society's most heinous crimes, essentially was given a free pass to come and go as she pleased in this type of institution.

I started off by saying that I am heartened to hear some of the language from across the way, in terms of the parliamentary secretary and the minister saying that they are going to investigate this to its fullest extent. I would offer that the two cases I brought up from Prince George also deserve a new set of eyes on their cases and a renewed investigation. I would implore our colleagues across the way to do more than just lip service. I hope that their words are true.

Sadly, what we have seen over the course of the previous four years and up to this point has really just been lip service. The victims and their families deserve better. We can always do better. If we lead with our hearts and put ourselves in the place of the victims' families, the first responders and those who do the investigations, we will always lead by putting our best foot forward.

I would challenge our colleagues across the way to do that. I know my colleagues in opposition are here to help wherever we can.

• (1215)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke a lot about victims and victims' families. Bill C-83 included a clause that would allow victims' families access to audio recordings of Pa-

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role Board hearings. This was something victims' families asked us for and we put it in the legislation. The party opposite actually voted against that bill.

When it comes to healing lodges, they are not a free pass. These are minimum-security institutions. We need to clarify the record on those two things.

The motion is about the appointments to the Parole Board, the importance of the independence of the Parole Board and also the independence of this investigation into what happened, and the tragic loss of life in this case. Does the hon. member not feel that the Parole Board needs to be independent?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, whether it is independent or not, they must be competent and there must be oversight. The case of Marylène Levesque proves that there has to be oversight by a minister who is able to review those cases that come forward which are over and above the normal, everyday cases that we would see. Cases such as that of Marylène Levesque are a horrendous abuse of authority. The instruction by the parole officer to this convicted murder, we can all agree, is shameful. It does require some oversight.

The member asked me if I think that the boards should be independent. They should be independent but there should be review and they should be competent. It should remain in the purview of a minister's file to necessitate that a review take place.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the review will be done by a five-member panel from within the Parole Board of Canada. Would the member not agree that the information the panel will be able to attain will be of great assistance in getting a better understanding of exactly what has taken place? What sort of independence does the member believe the Parole Board should have? He makes reference to the minister having that kind of oversight. To what degree should MPs be raising those individual cases?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I started my intervention by saying that we are the voices of victims. Often, we are the only voices of victims. We are the voices of the electors. This House does not belong to me and it does not belong to you, Mr. Speaker, it does not belong to my hon. colleague across the way, it does not belong to the Prime Minister; it belongs to the electors who elected the 338 members of Parliament to this place. That is who we are accountable to.

In terms of oversight, from time to time the Parole Board should be called before parliamentary committees to have a review. That is in the purview as well. It is important. Again, that is a reasonable question, but given the cases that we are dealing with and the information that I have garnered over the last four years in dealing with those two very serious cases in my riding, there needs to be some oversight. We need to be able to task our ministers, whether the existing minister or ministers in the future, to be able to review their files.

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Often in the committees that I have sat on, I say that our files are run by the bureaucrats. More often, our ministers need to take more of a handle on their files and make sure they are managing their files accordingly.

● (1220)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

I will start today by acknowledging that we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

I will take this opportunity to join my colleagues in sharing my sympathy with the family and friends of Marylène Levesque. The loss of her life was a senseless tragedy that did not need to happen. I am pleased that a thorough investigation has been initiated and that it includes the participation of two external advisers. The investigation and review that is currently taking place will determine the circumstances that preceded this awful situation. The results will be made public so that we can all learn from this horrendous incident and make the necessary changes to ensure that it does not happen again.

The loss of Marylène Levesque has brought forward questions about the safety of the female body that we often ask on this side of the House. We know that many Canadians face violence every day because of their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender. To get an idea of how large this problem really is, we funded a survey of safety in public and private spaces through the gender-based violence strategy. The findings were upsetting. Women were found to be nearly four times more likely to have experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public. Thirty per cent of women were sexually assaulted at least once since the age of 15 and 29% of women experienced inappropriate sexual behaviour in the workplace. We see this time and time again. We know that young women, students, bisexual and lesbian women, indigenous women and women with a disability are at an increased risk.

There is a stark contrast between our approach to addressing gender-based violence and that of my colleagues who introduced this motion. They have pushed forward a tough-on-crime agenda around sex work, hoping that it would diminish demand and eradicate prostitution, though many critics have warned and continue to tell us that in reality it makes the work more dangerous and drives it further underground.

Recently reported by Molly Hayes in *The Globe and Mail*, Sandra Wesley, executive director of Stella, a Montreal-based sex work organization, said, “We know firsthand how frequently men are violent toward sex workers, and criminalization prevents us from doing anything about it,” she said. “If we report something with the police, the immediate outcome tends to be that our workplaces get shut down. Our co-workers get arrested, our clients get arrested, we lose our income.” Jenny Duffy, board chair of Maggie’s Toronto Sex Workers Action Project, said in an email on Thursday that she was pleased that this case will be investigated, but added that it will not keep sex workers safe.

My colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, spoke eloquently on sex work and the need for Parliament to do more on this issue to keep these women safe. I thank him for his wise words.

We need to ensure that our laws meet their objectives and promote safety and security that is consistent with our rights and freedoms. Parliament is in the process of establishing a committee that can review this matter. This will be a complex and hard conversation to have, but while we discuss it, we have to remember Marylène Levesque and the hundreds of sex workers who have lost their lives. Let us be clear that there is a distinction between sex work and human trafficking.

Under the Harper Conservative government, important programs available to parole officers, like a specialized family violence program and access to a world-renowned sex researcher, were cut. The men and women who work as parole officers do extraordinary work in our community to ensure our public safety. I have met many of them who do their utmost with the tools that they have to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders. The Harper Conservatives slashed the community correction liaison officer that paired police with parole officers to support their work in the community.

These were not the only cuts made by the Harper government. When the members opposite were in government, they shut down 12 of 16 Status of Women Canada regional offices and barred any funding from women’s groups that were involved in advocacy. Their recent platform was eerily quiet about policy and programs to help survivors, even though they understand that successful policy has to be more than just tougher laws. We need wraparound, culturally sensitive programming that empowers survivors to regain self-confidence and control over their lives. The government is laying the foundation to provide just that.

At the end of the day, gender-based violence must not be tolerated in Canada. I am proud that our government has launched the first federal strategy to prevent gender-based violence. Our strategy includes prevention programs, support for survivors and their families, and the promotion of responsible legal and justice systems.

● (1225)

This strategy includes over \$200 million in new investments, including for prevention in teen and youth dating violence, support for victims, and innovative interventions and campaigns to raise awareness of survivors’ rights and sexual assault myths. Our strategy does this while also improving capacity to respond in a culturally safe manner. As well, we have passed legislation that clarified and strengthened the law on sexual assault to make it fairer and more compassionate toward survivors of sexual violence.

Importantly, we have extended firearms background checks to consider an applicant's entire life and not just the previous five years. I am particularly proud to have worked on this legislation and have added an amendment that ensures that gender-based violence must be considered during the firearms licence application process. This will start to ensure that abusive partners do not have firearms. There was a study done in Atlantic Canada that showed that 70% of those surveyed were less likely to come forward to report intimate partner violence when there was a firearm in the home. The Minister of Public Safety is working to expand on this concept further.

Both of these important steps forward were voted against by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who brought forward today's motion.

On this side of the House, we are making gains in our criminal justice system so that it is fairer and more compassionate to the survivors of sexual assault, and I will list a few.

We have clarified consent provisions, expanding rape shield provisions and establishing procedures for third party record applications. We amended the Criminal Code to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and making violence motivated by gender identity a hate crime. We listened to the concerns of survivors at a recent knowledge exchange. This event allowed survivors' voices to be heard alongside criminology and legal experts, community organizations and law enforcement. Their voices were heard, and we have learned from their experience with the justice system.

However, the work is not done. We must do more to prevent gender-based violence. The Minister for Women and Gender Equality continues to work tirelessly with the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to ensure that anyone facing gender-based violence has reliable and timely access to protection and services.

We are all saddened to learn of the loss of Marylène Levesque. We need to make changes to our laws and protocols to make Canada a safer place for all Canadians, including sex workers like her. I believe that real solutions are being brought forward by our government, while the other side lacks any policy or substance. I eagerly anticipate the findings of the investigation to ensure that the lessons learned are used to make better laws to keep all women safe.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, fundamentally, this is the question: Are there two classes of women in this country? Are there women in this country who need to be protected and are there women in this country who can be bought and sold? I would like the member opposite to answer that question.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I find it rich that the hon. member would ask a question like that when it was the Harper government that had put sex workers in the position that they are in, where their lives are in danger.

We absolutely believe that all women need to be protected, including sex workers, unlike the other side.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, violence against women is a long-standing issue that has yet to be addressed by successive Liberal and Conservative governments. Will the cur-

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rent government commit to implement the calls for justice in the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls report, which provides many measures that seek to prevent violence against women?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member to the House. I look forward to working with her on this issue and others as we move forward.

Obviously, the issue around murdered and missing indigenous women concerns all of us in this House. The recommendations from that report are important ones for us to move forward on. I thank the member for her question and look forward to working with her to see those recommendations implemented by our government.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to bring us back to the intent of the motion, which is to review the whole aspect of public safety and the public safety system. This needs to be in the spotlight. We need to look at the release of individuals deemed a threat by the very organization that authorizes their release. The whole purpose around this is this: Is the parole system working in the way it was intended to?

This is not to diminish anything to do with gender-based violence, because that is a peripheral issue that is certainly impacted by the tragedy that has happened, and we get that. Can the member tell the House what good things could come of such a motion and how we might be able to strengthen public safety by doing a review of the parole system?

● (1230)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the way my friend and colleague framed the question. I wish the motion were framed in the same way.

If we wanted to look into how to improve the parole system, support parole officers, make changes to the system and make investments to make our communities safer, I think we would find no disagreement among members of the House to do so. However, given the way the motion is framed, it is a direct attack on the Parole Board of Canada. The men and women on the Parole Board have been selected for their positions so they can make independent, unbiased decisions about offenders who come before them.

I hope the hon. member frames the motion in the way he mentioned and looks into the ways we can improve the parole system, as opposed to making an attack on the Parole Board of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent speech and her informed responses.

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Over the past four years, our government has placed a strong emphasis on the importance of addressing gender-based violence by making significant investments. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say on this issue. What does she think can be done, what is working and how important is it to realize that this is an ongoing problem? As we have seen, in Quebec, this has been the focus of a lot of attention lately. We have seen a number of femicides, and I think that we must never stop fighting gender-based violence as long as it continues to exist in our society.

I would like to hear what she thinks about these investments.

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, as the former vice-chair of the status of women committee, I am incredibly proud of the work we have done. However, there is still a lot more work to do.

We have invested in gender-based violence strategies to prevent violence. We have invested in ensuring that men are part of the conversation, because we know that gender-based violence is not only a woman's issue but a human issue, and we need men to be involved.

We have made tremendous strides. I am proud of all members of the government for the work we have done, in particular the work we did at the status of women committee around violence against young women and girls. Many of our recommendations have been brought forward by the government as policy or legislation.

Just today, we supported a private member's bill from former member Rona Ambrose, which would ensure judges get the proper education on judicial assault. This is about working across party lines to make sure we are protecting Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the system that was designed to protect the public clearly failed in this situation.

First, I would like to extend my condolences to Marylène Levesque's family and friends. Her tragic death obviously should never have happened and it has no doubt caused a great deal of discomfort to them and to Canadians, as we hear a little more information each day about what took place. I believe that anyone who reflects on what took place would want to see some sort of justice on the issue.

To that end, this tragic death cannot and will not go unaccounted for as far as ensuring there is justice. As has been pointed out, a couple of investigations will be taking place: the criminal investigation and the broader internal investigation.

I have been listening to the debate, and four Conservatives have spoken on the issue. Three of them made reference to Tori Stafford. I raise this because I wonder why the Conservatives, at times, tend to put the politics of an issue ahead of what is really important.

I was here when the Conservatives brought up the Tori Stafford incident when Terri-Lynne McClintic was transferred to a healing lodge. The Conservative Party was quite upset over that. I remember listening to more than one member of Parliament give an incredible visual description of what had happened to Tori Stafford.

They tried to give the impression that it was the Government of Canada's fault, as if this government had ultimately allowed for the healing lodge placement of Ms. McClintic. I remind Conservatives that as we got more into the debate, we found out that it was actually Stephen Harper's regime that had her transferred to a medium-security facility, which made her eligible to be brought over to a healing lodge. We also found out that under Harper's regime, other child murderers were put into other medium-security facilities.

Why do I bring that up? Another Conservative speaker has said that our system is broken. Now this tragic death is being brought up, and again the Conservatives seem to be more concerned about trying to blame the Government of Canada, as if we are the ones to blame for the tragic death.

I believe that all members, no matter their political party, understand exactly what has taken place. All of us are offended that an individual on parole committed the outrageous offence of murder. Ms. Levesque is the victim here. That is why I started off by extending my condolences to her family and friends, as we all try to get a better understanding of the situation. I think the response to date by the government has been very respectful of all sides of the issues that have come before us.

• (1235)

Having this internal review is a good starting point. It is a way for us as legislators to get a better understanding of not only what took place to lead to this particular individual's release, but some of the commentary that was being provided by the case manager with respect to this particular file. I see that as a good, positive step forward.

When I think of the comments I have heard about the appointment process, I have no reservations about doing a comparison. Opposition members have said that it is the government that makes appointments to the Parole Board. They are trying to imply that this is what ultimately led to this tragic incident. Again, I do not believe that for a moment.

In fact, as the parliamentary secretary for public safety pointed out, the regional vice-chair is a Stephen Harper appointment. Any new board member that will be hearing cases has to be approved by that vice-chair. There is an extensive process of training that takes place.

For the Conservatives to imply that somehow this government has either direct or indirect culpability in what has taken place is just wrong. I have heard it from more than one member opposite. They have had four speakers on this issue, and at least three of them have tried to imply that.

If they are genuine in what they are trying to raise today and it is a legitimate concern, then they do not need to go along that line. Yes, there are some important facts that need to be discussed and investigated, but I would suggest that the appointment process today is far superior to what it was under the former Conservative government. All one would need to do is take a look at that.

I am really intrigued by how this debate has been broadened, and I think there is a great deal of merit to that. Years ago, I brought up the issue of violence against women and girls, in particular in our indigenous communities, and called for a public inquiry. I was very happy to see the government act on this initiative. I was also very happy when the former public safety minister brought in legislation to allow victims of rape, for example, to get recordings of parole hearings and be present during them.

I wanted to move what hopefully the official opposition will see as a friendly amendment. Considering that the Parole Board of Canada explicitly opposed permitting the offender to visit a massage parlour, we seek to amend part (a) of the motion.

I therefore move, seconded by the hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells, that the motion be amended by replacing the words “condemn the decision of the Parole Board of Canada that led to a young woman’s death by an inmate during day parole in January of this year” with “condemn the management of this offender, which may have contributed to the murder of a young woman.”

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Why do you hate women?

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles if he consents to this amendment being moved.

• (1245)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I do not.

The Deputy Speaker: Since there is no consent, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member who just walked in the chamber, and I do not know the riding of the member, shouted across the way that the Liberals hate women.

That is completely inappropriate and I would ask for the member to clarify what she said, and if such is the case, to retract what she said. That is entirely out of line, especially in this debate.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his point of order. I did not hear the comment as he described it. Certainly we can take that into consideration.

I do not know if the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke wishes to address the point. I would certainly allow that. Points of order include comments that are heard from time to time and can be commented upon. Unless it reached the bar of unparliamentary language, per se, that would be something that would have to be taken into consideration if, in fact, it is a point of order. That would be the part of the Standing Orders that would be deemed to be an infraction in this case.

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I see the parliamentary secretary is rising again. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, this is not the kind of language we hear from time to time in the House. This is way out of line. I would ask you to look into the matter and look into the Hansard because I find it offensive. I am sure all my colleagues on this side and in the House find it offensive, as well. This is not the kind of language we use. It is unbecoming of a member of Parliament.

The Deputy Speaker: That being the case, I will take the matter into consideration, as the member has suggested. We will get back to the House, if necessary.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to read a quote from the Parole Board that the Liberals brought forward and see if the parliamentary secretary still thinks we need to pin this on the officer. I do not think that the officer is innocent in this case.

The Parole Board said:

Although you are still single and you say you aren't ready to enter into a serious relationship with a woman, you are able to efficiently evaluate your needs and expectations towards women.... During the hearing, your parole officer underlined a strategy that was developed with the goal that would allow you to meet women in order to meet your sexual needs.

The Parole Board knew exactly what was going on. That is why our motion is about the Parole Board. Does the hon. member care to comment on that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, maybe the best thing is to be very specific. What I indicated prior to moving the motion is that it is really important to consider that the Parole Board of Canada explicitly opposed permitting the offender to visit a massage parlour.

That is the reason I made the amendment I did. I believe it should be more focused on the area that I believe Canadians, as a whole, and parliamentarians are most concerned about.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I would have liked to have been notified that the amendment was going to be moved. I was not. If we get notice, we can get a better idea. I feel that, on the whole, our motion is clear and precise and should go ahead.

I have a question for the parliamentary secretary regarding his speech. He mentioned that the former board members were incompetent and that the new ones were better. Can he explain that?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I made reference to former and current board members, and I am very comfortable in knowing that the appointments this government made to the Parole Board have been of the highest calibre.

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I would not have any problem in terms of drawing the comparison of appointments by this government to the former government. It is not meant to be a reflection on previous appointments as much as it is to give a vote of confidence for the ones who have been appointed. If we take a look at the number of appointments, we will find that under the Harper regime, they were more politically based. Ours are more merit-driven appointments.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1250)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for St. John's East.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a very disturbing case. I want to outline the fact that the Parole Board was certainly aware that this individual had been given the permission to meet women, “only for the purpose of responding to [his] sexual needs”, since he had been granted parole in March 2019. It continued over this period of time, and in September the board recognized that they did not agree with the appropriateness of the strategy. However, they went ahead and continued this, so it deserves condemnation.

Bill C-5 was tabled this morning by the government to ensure that judges are familiar with, and have proper continuing education on, matters related to sexual assault law and the social context.

Does the parliamentary secretary agree that it is appropriate for the Parole Board members and for the committee on public safety to insist that there be appropriate training for Parole Board members and officials, to ensure that they are aware of the fact that this kind of case is rooted in misogyny and the devaluation of the lives of women in general and, in this case, sex workers in particular?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, one of the encouraging aspects of the legislation that is being brought forward is the way in which even the former interim leader of the Conservative Party participated. It was a piece of legislation that would heighten the level of importance and awareness of gender-related issues and training. I see that as a very strong positive.

It is encouraging when we see political parties coming together to support initiatives such as the one we saw earlier, which is the tabling of legislation that would send a very strong message to the community as a whole. I see it as a positive, and I suspect that once it gets into committee there will be all sorts of dialogue in terms of how it could possibly be applied to other institutions. I will leave that up to the standing committee.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for South Surrey—White Rock.

It is with heavy hearts that we come here to speak today. At the beginning of January, Marylène Levesque was an innocent young woman alive in Canada. A few weeks later, on January 22, Marylène was brutally murdered by a convicted murderer out on parole.

To say that this should never have happened is a significant understatement. Marylène should be alive today. She should never have met with Eustachio Gallese. Her death is tragic and utterly

senseless. It is one more example of the preventable violence that women and girls face across Canada by men who view them as nothing more than objects and commodities to be bought and sold. Canadians are outraged. They have every right to be. They want answers.

The public safety minister told the House that a full investigation would take place and would be conducted by the commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada and the chair of the Parole Board of Canada. It is an investigation that will try to answer why this senseless murder took place, and how to prevent others.

We already know the Parole Board of Canada allowed a man with a history of domestic violence against women out on day parole. He had already brutally murdered his own wife in 2004. Prior to that, he committed violence against an earlier partner in 1997. However, despite his clear history of repeated violence, the Parole Board and Gallese's parole officer made the shameful decision to sanction more violence by condoning and encouraging his perceived right to buy sex, thus signing the death warrant of Marylène. This is appalling. They should not have encouraged him to break the law.

In 2014, Parliament expressed grave concerns about the exploitation and violence inherent in prostitution through Bill C-36. Through this bill, the buying of sex was made illegal because of the harm and violence created by the demand for prostitution.

The goal of Parliament was to protect human dignity and the equality of all Canadians by discouraging prostitution, which has a disproportionate impact on women and children, particularly indigenous women and girls. The bill did not seek to reduce the harm of prostitution, but to eliminate prostitution altogether because of the violence and exploitation inherent in it.

Prostitution creates an environment of violence and inequality for women and girls, perpetuates sexual commodification and turns the most vulnerable in our society into objects to be bought and sold. That is why Bill C-36 sought to eliminate the demand by prohibiting the purchase of sex.

Countries around the world that have legalized prostitution have seen the violence against, and the murder of, those who work in prostitution. They have seen sex trafficking increase, especially among youth. This has happened in Germany, New Zealand and the Netherlands. The legitimization of prostitution normalizes attitudes of violence, misogyny and the objectification of women and girls.

Men do not have the right to buy sex, or to buy women and girls for pleasure. However, in this country, I dare say in this chamber, there are those who believe that prostitution should be legalized and that men should be entitled to buy sex and treat women and girls as commodities.

This line of thinking is heinous. It is evil, and a brazen attack on equality and the safety of all women and girls in Canada. This insidious rationale was on full display in the Parole Board's last written decision with respect to Gallese where it states, although he is single and cannot say whether he is ready to enter into a serious relationship with a woman:

...you are able to efficiently evaluate your needs and expectations towards women.... During the hearing, your parole officer underlined a strategy that was developed with the goals that would allow you to meet women in order to meet your sexual needs.

In other words, while the Parole Board acknowledged that intimate relationships with some women were inappropriate as they would be unsafe, it explicitly acknowledged his sexual needs and affirmed his perceived right to buy sex from those trapped in prostitution. In their minds, the Parole Board members were protecting some women that they deemed more valuable, while sending a convicted murderer to prey upon those who were the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.

As this tragic case demonstrates, it perpetuates the idea that there should be a class of women who are able to be purchased for sex by men who believe they have the right to objectify and harm those who are for sale. That is what we are talking about with this case today.

● (1255)

The Liberal-appointed Parole Board members thought so little of those in prostitution that they were willing to knowingly put these women's lives in grave danger, women like Marylène. How else can we explain their words and actions, other than that they believed buying sex should be legal and therefore condoned Gallese's perceived right to sex as if it was legal? In their minds, Gallese's perceived right to buy sex was more important than the law.

If Parole Board members had followed the law, they would not have granted Gallese's parole for this purpose. If they had followed the law, they would have recognized the exploitation and violence inherent in prostitution instead of supporting Gallese's sexual needs. However, the Parole Board's attitudes toward women and prostitution reflect what we have seen from the Liberal government over the past few years: a clear pattern of always putting the rights of criminals ahead of the rights of victims and those at risk.

We know indigenous women and girls are the most represented victim group in sex trafficking and prostitution in Canada. They make up only 4% of Canada's population, yet make up more than 50% of the victims in Canada.

Last year the government reduced some of the human trafficking offences to summary offences, which will significantly increase the likelihood that a human trafficking offence against indigenous women will proceed as a summary conviction offence, further denying them justice. The government also eliminated the consecutive sentences for human trafficking that were adopted under the previous government. The loss of consecutive sentencing leaves victims with a continued reluctance to come forward and report a crime due to their immense fear and the psychological control that traffickers have over their victims.

In the days following this horrific case of injustice, many survivors of sex trafficking and prostitution spoke out. They are out-

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raged and want justice for Marylène and others. I want to share with this House a few of these voices.

Trisha Baptie of B.C., a survivor of sex trafficking, stated:

[In my 15 years of involvement in the sex industry] it was never the laws that beat and raped and killed me and my friends, it was men. It was never the location we were in that was unsafe, it was the men we were in that location with who made it unsafe.

Baptie further stated that our laws must always focus on ending the demand for paid sex.

Cassandra Diamond, a survivor of sex trafficking in massage parlours in Toronto, said the following:

...commodifying a woman's body is dangerous, always. It sends a message that buying someone is acceptable, enshrining the power imbalance where people from average to above-average socioeconomic status purchase other humans, mainly women and girls who have below-average socioeconomic status and power.

Timea Nagy, a survivor who was trafficked from Hungary to Canada and sold in legal strip clubs and massage parlours in the GTA, stated:

To think and promote sex work as "normal work" must come to an end. The Liberal government is completely blinded and refuses to hear our side of the story. How many more deaths will it take them to listen? 10? 20? 30?

I strongly condemn the Parole Board of Canada's decision to allow a convicted murderer to buy sex and I hope the government will also condemn this decision.

I also call on this government to stop allowing prostitution to be legitimized. Legitimizing prostitution and downplaying the seriousness of sex trafficking will lead to more violence against women and increased discrimination toward those most at risk in our country. Legitimizing prostitution creates two classes of people, those who can be commodified and sold and those who should not be.

There are some things in Canada that are just not for sale. For example, my vote is not for sale. Democracy is not for sale. People should never be for sale. Women and girls in Canada deserve better.

● (1300)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I ask the hon. member to consider listening to the voices of sex workers. Sex workers are saying that sex work is work.

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I also ask the hon. member about the Harper government's decision to implement Bill C-36, which criminalized the establishments that sex workers go to in order to feel safe and criminalized their ability to hire security. Does the member acknowledge that this is a factor in this death and many others?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I would respond to that by asking the hon. member across the way if it is an area of work that she has considered and if that is an appropriate—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Randall Garrison: Shame. Shame on you.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: I think this makes the point. I do not think any woman in this country ever chooses this as a job. This is something women are trafficked into and something we have to work hard to end in Canada. Prostitution in Canada is inherently dangerous, and we must work hard to ensure that all Canadians have a safe place to live in this country. We do not want to see our women and girls forced into prostitution.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I listened to the hon. member's response to my colleague's question, and he made a very unparliamentary remark. He seems to be suggesting that the hon. member asked this question because she had a particular interest in a certain line of work. That is insulting and unparliamentary, notwithstanding the fact that the hon. member recognized that sex workers who are in great danger in this country are, in fact, workers.

● (1305)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, in no way did I mean to affect the reputation of the hon. member in question. The very fact that I must tread delicately on this makes my point about the nature of prostitution.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we move to questions and comments, this is the second point of order we have had on this particular debate today on the opposition motion. Members will appreciate that the topic before the House brings great import and sensitivity. I would certainly encourage hon. members to be conscious of their comments in this regard.

I noted that the comments in the last point of order and the last intervention were unparliamentary, and in this particular case created some disorder. That is usually a test around which chair occupants enumerate whether there has been unparliamentary language used in the House. I would encourage hon. members to take care in how these arguments are framed. Provoking disorder in the House is certainly not something the Standing Orders permit, so I would urge care in that regard as we go forward in this debate.

Questions and comments, the hon. Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for the Conservative member.

The first question is whether the member believes in the independence of the Parole Board of Canada in making decisions in the work it does, or does he think, as was the case under the previous Conservative government under Stephen Harper, that it should con-

tinuously intervene with independent institutions, including the justice system. That is my first question.

My second question is whether sex workers should have the same protections. Is this a conversation and he and his colleagues are willing to have?

We have a very serious matter in front of us. This was about victims, and it is unfortunate that we have lost a precious life. Life is precious, so would he like to have the conversation with regard to ensuring that sex workers have the protections they deserve as workers in our country?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, to the first point, I am very proud of the Harper era of government in this country. That was part of what inspired me to run, so I do not think we have anything to apologize for there. Under Stephen Harper, the trust in our institutions, police forces and court systems went up, so that speaks to the hard work that we did.

On the second point, I firmly believe that some things are just not for sale. I said that at the end of my speech. I do not think that sex is something that ought to be bought. It is part of a healthy relationship, and I think it should be maintained in that context and not be something that is bought and sold. That is probably the fundamental difference between this side of the House and that side of the House.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the conversation we have almost started here would be a very useful one with respect to sex workers and using the term “workers” as a way of framing that activity. However, I want to go back to the question at hand.

If this goes to a committee, what sorts of things does the hon. member think the committee should be thinking about in terms of its approach to getting to the bottom of this? I can think of a number of different angles that could be pursued here, but I am wondering what line of questioning he would want to see take place if he were sitting on that committee.

● (1310)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, one of the first things is that the law would be obeyed. The first lines about granting someone parole are that they will obey the law if they are out on parole.

There was one comment on Facebook about the parole officer being this guy's wingman. That is precisely where we do not want to end up. Bill C-36 made it clear that sex is not to be bought in Canada; therefore, we should have our Parole Board at least enforce the law.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great concern that I rise today to speak to the motion before the House that condemns the decision of the Parole Board of Canada to grant day parole to a violent offender, which led to a young woman's murder by an inmate on day parole in January of this year, and to instruct the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to conduct hearings into this matter, including a review of the changes made by the government in 2017 to the board's nomination process with a view to recommending measures to prevent another such tragedy from happening.

On January 22, our country was shocked and saddened over the news of the death of Marylène Levesque. The vivacious young 22-year-old woman was found dead in a Quebec City hotel room. Her accused murderer, 51-year-old Eustachio Gallese, brutally murdered his own wife in 2004 by beating her with a hammer and stabbing her multiple times. He was subsequently sentenced in 2006, receiving a life sentence without parole for 15 years. However, in January of this year, the Parole Board of Canada, acknowledging risk, allowed this man with a history of domestic and, I would say, sadistic violence against women out on day parole, which resulted in the death of the innocent Marylène.

This incident is beyond unacceptable and highlights once again the failure of the Liberal government's soft-on-crime approach. As everyone in the House can remember, it was not too long ago in 2018 when the Liberals fought tooth and nail against doing the right thing and putting Tori Stafford's killer back behind bars after Tori's murderer had been transferred to a healing lodge. We now have another brutal tragedy in front of us, and the Liberals' limited reactions are designed to minimize the severity of what has happened.

We are in 2020, and there is no room for such tragedy in our society. It is time for the Liberal government to assume responsibility, take action, talk less and put the rights of victims, especially vulnerable women, ahead of the sexual needs of criminals. Murderers such as Mr. Gallese should never have been given day parole in the first place, but what this highlights and what is troubling to me are the number of inexperienced members handling such sensitive files.

Current laws on sex work, introduced by the Conservative government in 2014, clearly indicate that it is illegal to purchase or advertise sexual services. This is not about whether sex work is legitimate work; it is about a murder that was preventable.

However, when Mr. Gallese's day parole was extended last September, a Parole Board officer noted that a so-called risk management strategy was developed in order to allow Gallese to meet women, but only to respond to his sexual needs. Really?

Such lack of judgment is extremely disturbing and clearly shows how low a priority the Liberal government gives to the safety of women and all Canadians. The government's mismanagement and revolving-door prison system is costing innocent Canadians their lives. This is not high-calibre decision-making.

[*Translation*]

Canadians are the ones at risk and the ones facing the consequences of this Liberal government's failures. By letting murderers

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loose on our streets, the Liberals are putting many women at risk, as well as men and young children.

• (1315)

[*English*]

We all know that in 2017, several Parole Board members sent a letter to the Prime Minister warning him about the potential ramifications of changes to the process for appointing Parole Board members. However, they never got a reply. What happened instead? Many of them did not have their terms renewed and were replaced by new members with very little experience.

In fact, last Wednesday, according to two former Parole Board members, the change to the Parole Board of Canada's nomination procedures directly resulted in the appointment of members with a lack of experience and may have been a critical factor in the death of the innocent Marylène Levesque.

Over the past couple of the days, the public safety minister has told the House of Commons that a full investigation will be conducted, jointly by the commissioner of Correctional Service Canada and the chair of the Parole Board of Canada, to determine the circumstances surrounding Gallese's release.

Considering the seriousness of the current situation, bureaucrats investigating bureaucrats is not enough. We are demanding a full independent external investigation. This is a matter of transparency, security and safety of all Canadians. If the Liberal government has nothing to hide and wants to be completely transparent with Canadians, it should stop hiding behind curtains and vote in favour of our opposition day motion tomorrow.

Our criminal justice system is discredited, our security is threatened, women are especially vulnerable and it is our duty as the official opposition to hold the Liberal government to account and shed light on errors in our systems.

[*Translation*]

This is about the safety of Canadians, particularly women. This investigation should not be taken lightly.

[*English*]

There must be justice for Marylène Levesque—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to apologize unreservedly for my comments toward the member for Victoria.

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The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock for his intervention. We will not take any time away from the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock. We appreciate, for the benefit of other hon. members, that when such occasions come upon them, it is always good, as the member has demonstrated here, to do it at the first available instance. We thank the hon. member.

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, again, this is about transparency. It is about not doing an internal look at things. It is about having an external look. We need that for transparency.

Canadians need to feel safe in their communities. Certainly in my own riding, just today the mayor of Surrey has said that his citizens are feeling less safe than ever before.

We need to have justice for the victim, Marylène Levesque. That is her name. She was 22 years old. We must look into how this preventable murder happened. This heinous crime should never happen again.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier, a member opposite suggested that the Conservatives were trying to blame the government for what had taken place. This sounds very much like the Liberals trying to blame legal firearm owners for a crime they did not commit.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would agree that this is an extremely important issue that should not be politicized, but rather have those individuals directly accountable for their actions, such as the Parole Board.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, it is very much about being held accountable for a decision that ended with the murder of a young woman. This is a serious matter.

This is not and should not be about small-p or large-P politics, back and forth. The answer given by the government several times was that it was an independent board. That is the whole point here. Yes, the Parole Board is independent, but how are the members appointed? What were their credentials? How were they chosen? What are the parameters within their job? What training are they given to do their job well?

• (1320)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member referred to the necessity for an independent review, yet it feels like we are questioning the independence of the Parole Board of Canada. That is what we are trying to understand.

Does the member believe that the Parole Board of Canada should be independent? Her answer referred to the importance of ensuring that these merit-based appointments, which are open and transparent, and available on line for Canadians to apply for, be given the needed resources to ensure they could do their jobs. Under the previous Conservative government, programs were cut. Did the member support those cuts that would have provided these people with the resources they needed?

Because the member refers to the victim by name, and we acknowledge an individual has lost her life, would she agree that we

should be having a conversation on the importance of sex workers being given the same rights as all workers in Canada?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, this debate is not about the question the minister just put to me. This debate is about the preventable murder of a young woman. She was murdered because of a decision by Parole Board members appointed by the Liberal government.

This is not a debate about the independence of the Parole Board. We are all parliamentarians. If this is referred to a parliamentary committee, the members understand the importance of independence among bodies such as this.

We want to understand why these people were chosen, how they are held to account and what training and parameters they are given. This should never happen again.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member back to the House. We have had some good exchanges over the years here.

I would like to ask her a question about the larger context. This debate is larger than just the decision of the Parole Board. This debate is about the circumstances in which the decision was carried out.

Earlier I talked about attitudes toward violence against women and treating violence toward domestic partners as somehow being a lesser threat to the public than others and treating sex workers as somehow less worthy of the safety and protection than others in our society. Would the member not agree with me that as well as those narrow questions which must be answered about the Parole Board, there are some larger issues at play here about attitudes toward gender-based violence?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, this is about human dignity. It is about the right of all Canadians to feel safe and secure no matter what their pursuits are at any given time. It is about how decisions are made.

There are vulnerable populations in our country and this young woman may have been classed in that group. Having been a family lawyer over many years before I came to this place, I am familiar with the way domestic violence is viewed and that it is not given the serious weight it should be given.

This inmate had a history of violent assault against another partner before he killed his wife with a hammer. That is why I said this person was someone with a history of sadistic violence against women.

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This must stop. I agree it is part of a larger conversation and we should have that conversation.

Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Orléans.

I appreciate this opportunity to take part in this very important debate, which is taking place in the aftermath of the tragic murder of Marylène Levesque.

Before going any further, let me offer my sincere condolences to the victim's family and friends. Our thoughts are with them and with all the victims and survivors of gender-based violence.

Fundamentally, what happened on that day should never have happened, and it is gender-based violence. I want to take my time to shed light on gender-based violence in Canada, which takes place far too often in the country and is completely unacceptable.

In Canada, gender-based violence continues to take place at an alarming rate. Between 2008 and 2018, over 700 women were killed by a current or former legally married or common-law husband or other type of partner.

In 2018 alone, a total of 164 women and girls were killed in Canada.

The reality for indigenous women and girls is even worse. In 2018, the rate of homicide was nearly seven times higher for indigenous women and girls than of their non-indigenous counterparts.

What is more, 32% of women in Canada have experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public.

In my riding of Brampton West, the region I represent, in the region of Peel, half of all homicides in 2019 were domestic related, specifically related to gender-based violence.

These statistics represent women. They represent women with families, women with futures, either taken from them or forever altered because of the long-term impact of gender-based violence.

I could go on and on. Gender-based violence has lifelong impacts on an individual's physical, mental and sexual health. The effects are serious and long term and impacts not just their families and friends, but entire communities.

Despite progress, gender-based violence persists as an intolerable and preventable problem in Canada, one that our government has taken concrete steps to address.

In 2017, we launched "It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-based Violence", the first strategy of its kind. The strategy has invested \$200 million in federal initiatives to prevent gender-based violence, support survivors and their families and promote responsive legal and justice systems.

I want to thank members of the minister's gender-based violence advisory council for their tireless and wise counsel as we have worked together over the past several years to end gender-based violence. This council is composed of survivors, front-line service providers and experts in the field from across the country.

I also want to take an opportunity to thank the countless not-for-profit organizations in the community that support women and girls fleeing violence. I would like to especially thank Hope 24/7 in Brampton West. It does incredible work to support survivors of gender-based violence.

Since 2015, our government has taken vital steps to strengthen our justice system and support survivors, including by enshrining a clearer definition of consent to clarify that an unconscious person is incapable of consenting, that only yes means yes, and to ensure that the past sexual history of individuals cannot be used to question their credibility.

We have also done this by toughening the domestic assault laws by establishing higher maximum sentences for repeat offenders; ensuring the justice system recognizes the seriousness of these offences; recognizing strangulation as an elevated form of assault; mandating the RCMP to complete the review of over 30,000 sexual assault case files that had previously been deemed unfounded in order to strengthen police accountability, training and awareness, investigative accountability, victim support, public education and communication.

● (1325)

We have also funded at least 7,000 shelter spaces, created or repaired for survivors of family violence, which means that women and girls fleeing domestic violence have a place to go. We have provided five days of paid leave for victims of family violence working in a federally regulated sector so that survivors have a greater opportunity to seek support, which can help with the healing process.

In 2018, we became the first government to introduce and pass legislation dealing specifically with workplace harassment and sexual violence in Parliament and in federally regulated workplaces. In 2019, we introduced the national strategy to combat human trafficking, a whole-of-government approach to address this unthinkable crime, and amendments were made to the Criminal Code to strengthen related laws.

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Finally, this past December, we released data from the first-ever national gender-based violence survey. The survey of safety in public and private spaces is a first of three national surveys funded through Women and Gender Equality Canada as part of our federal gender-based violence strategy. We are also funding a survey on gender-based violence with post-secondary institutions and gender-based violence within workplaces in Canada. The data from these surveys will help improve information on the nature and extent of various forms of gender-based violence in the general population. This has improved our understanding of the experiences of survivors who have endured gender-based violence, so that we have more responsive initiatives that are better tailored to their needs.

This year, we intend to build on the work by the creation of the national action plan to end gender-based violence. As outlined in the recent Speech from the Throne, we will work with our partners so that anyone facing gender-based violence has reliable and timely access to protection and services, no matter who they are or where they live.

I think it is fair to say that our government has taken action on gender-based violence, to prevent it and to ensure that those who experience it have access to timely and responsive services. We are not sitting idly by while crimes such as the one that took place on January 22 in Quebec City continue to take place. We are tackling this problem head-on, and we know that until there are no more deaths like this or experiences of gender-based violence in Canada, there is always more that needs to be done.

Gender-based violence must not be tolerated. We will continue to work with survivors, community partners, the private sector and all orders of government to end it in all its forms. We also know that there is an awful lot of work that is left to do, and I look forward to working with all members in this House to make that happen.

Once again, on behalf of myself, all of my constituents and all members of this House, we send our deepest condolences to the victim's family and friends on this tragedy.

• (1330)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her comments and echo her condolences to the families and friends of the victims.

Can the member explain why Mr. Gallese, who has killed before and was deemed a threat specifically to women, and the member has identified that this was specifically gender-based violence, was told to engage in sex with a female sex worker? Is the implication through this order that the lives of these women are somehow less valuable than women who are not engaged in sex work?

Ms. Kamal Khera: Mr. Speaker, first, let me reiterate that the tragic murder of Ms. Levesque should never have happened. Once again, our thoughts and prayers are with her family and friends.

It is also important to note that a thorough administrative review with external investigators will be taking place to determine the circumstances around this killing. That investigation, as has been suggested by the minister, will be transparent and the findings will be shared with the public.

It is our foremost priority to keep Canadians safe and we will work tirelessly to prevent any similar incidents from happening ever again here in Canada.

• (1335)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the member had a background in nursing prior to coming to the House. I am sure that she had the opportunity to witness women who were put into situations where they were subjected to violent acts such as we are discussing today.

Can the hon. member use her experience to highlight the need for such resources to be available to women so that they have all the tools that they need?

Ms. Kamal Khera: Mr. Speaker, as I stated in my remarks earlier, despite progress that we have made, gender-based violence persists as an intolerable and preventable problem in Canada. We have taken concrete actions.

In 2017, we launched a gender-based violence strategy, the first of its kind, by investing \$200 million in federal initiatives, to prevent gender-based violence, support survivors and their families, and promote responsive legal and justice systems.

I think it is also important to continue to support those local organizations that are at the front line, supporting survivors. In my riding of Brampton West I am extremely proud to have many organizations like this. One that I would like to highlight is Hope 24/7, which has been doing incredible work over the years to support victims of sexual assault and survivors. These organizations are much needed in our communities and we need to continue to support them.

Working with all members of this House, we can ensure that something like this never happens again in Canada.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, certainly there are many areas in which parliamentarians from all parties would wish to work together trying to end gender-based violence.

I want to ask the member about appointments to the Parole Board. They are obviously political decisions made by the government. Part of the context for this, we should all agree, is that it was a bad decision by the Parole Board in this case to release somebody who was a risk to reoffend specifically against women and to give him permission to have that contact. This decision was made by Parole Board members who were relatively inexperienced and appointees of the government.

Does the member think that the reviews undertaken in this case should include a review of the process by which the government made those appointments and, in fact, chose to not reappoint experienced members, but rather appointed many new members to the Parole Board? Should there be some accountability for decisions to appoint people who seem to be unprepared to make good evaluations in these cases that are in the public interest?

Ms. Kamal Khara: Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that appointments of board members are done through a Government of Canada selection process. In 2016, our government implemented an open, transparent and merit-based appointment process throughout the government. This new process has resulted in an increased number of applicants for board positions as well as a greater diversity to truly reflect Canada, as well as for their experience in law, corrections, psychology, education, policing and criminology. That is important.

Unlike the Conservatives, who often appointed partisan donors, field candidates and former political staffers to the Parole Board of Canada, I am extremely proud of the open, transparent and merit-based process that we have in place.

• (1340)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chance to speak to this motion put forward by the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles. Before I go any further, I want to take this opportunity to recognize and thank the thousands of men and women who work in corrections every day and for the work that they do.

My heart broke when I learned of the murder of Marylène Levesque.

[Translation]

This young woman was 22 years old.

[English]

As a mother, I cannot even begin to imagine how her family and friends must be feeling in the wake of her passing.

[Translation]

I offer my sincere condolences to Ms. Levesque's family and friends.

Simply put, this never should have happened. The circumstances that led to this loss of life need to be examined in depth by external investigators to ensure that a situation like this does not happen again. This is exactly what this government proposes to do.

[English]

As we heard from the hon. Minister of Public Safety, our government intends to carry out a full and transparent administrative review of the incidents, aimed at the decision that led to the untimely murder of Marylène Levesque. Why was a convicted murderer on day parole apparently allowed to visit a massage parlour in the first place, despite the fact that the Parole Board of Canada explicitly opposed it during a hearing back in September of last year?

I look forward to reading the findings of the administrative review into Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board of

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Canada, as well as the outcome of the criminal murder investigation currently being undertaken by Sûreté du Québec.

I also agree with the suggestion put forward by the hon. member that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, but I believe that it would be a mistake to do so before both the internal review and the criminal investigation have concluded.

There is no question that a full parliamentary study will shed further light on how we got here and will help to recommend a path forward to ensure that no one else will have their life cut short like this again.

[Translation]

However, to begin that study now would not be nearly as effective as it could be when we consider that the relevant experts and officials would not be able to comment while an investigation is ongoing.

I strongly believe that the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security could carry out this study once the officials have finished, so that the witnesses would be able to share their opinions openly and answer questions freely. It would also allow committee members to hear from experts directly on the findings of the review in order to make fully informed and effective recommendations.

• (1345)

[English]

On the whole, I agree with the sentiments expressed in the hon. member's motion and I will be supporting it. However, I disagree with the immediate call to review the open, transparent and merit-based appointment process that was implemented by our government in 2017, as part of a larger push to improve Governor in Council appointments across the board.

This move ensured that a candidate's qualifications mattered more than their political contributions. It also opened the application process to allow for a more diverse pool of Canadians than ever before. At the time that the Conservatives left office, six of nine full-time Parole Board members in Quebec were Conservative partisans, and eight of nine were men.

Today, the board is made up of highly qualified individuals from diverse backgrounds. Most have backgrounds in law and corrections, psychology and education, policing, criminology and social work. Nearly a quarter are indigenous or belong to a visible minority.

Rather than immediately reviewing the appointment process for the Parole Board, I believe the most prudent question would be to determine why, following a PBC recommendation, the accused was apparently allowed to visit a massage parlour while on day parole. That, among other things, is what the administrative review will be examining.

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We need to find out if the established protocols were followed properly, and how we can work to put safeguards in place. From there, should the findings of the review determine that a further review of the changes made to the nomination process is warranted, then the standing committee would be an appropriate place for that. I believe that, without a full understanding of the facts, this would be premature.

In any given year there are between 7,000 and 8,000 Canadians on some form of parole or conditional release. In 2013-14, 17 people were convicted of a violent offence, while in 2018-19, the number was down to just five. That year, 99.9% of day parolees did not commit a violent crime.

In summary, even though acts like this are extremely rare, we are reminded that we can and must do more to ensure, the best we can, that offenders serving out their sentences do not pose a risk to the public.

Keeping Canadians safe remains our top priority. We need to work tirelessly to prevent tragedies like this from ever happening again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

Comments from Liberal government members so far today have all been along the same lines. They either say that the former Parole Board members appointed by the previous government were incompetent, or that the majority of them were men, which was a problem. First of all, that is a very serious thing to say.

Second, Liberal members have also claimed that the recidivism rate is not that high, that there are many inmates on parole, but not much happens. I would like my colleague to table the report prepared by Public Safety that indicates the recidivism rates.

• (1350)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the report in front of me.

However, I know that, since we began using the new process, we have had highly qualified individuals assessing offenders hoping to go back and live in the community.

I would like to ask the member why he is bringing this up today when an investigation is already under way to help us determine the reasons for this tragedy and shed light on why it happened. This is what the House has agreed to do.

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the member that, as a member of Parliament with a substantial number of federal institutions in my riding, the parole officers, the people on the ground, have outlined that many offences committed by people on day parole are not put forward by our Crown prosecutors in British Columbia, and that statistics given by the department do not reflect the reality of the dangers that people in my community face because of the instances taking place.

Parole officers in my riding have indicated many times that they are losing hope in our justice system, and losing hope in protecting our communities.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I have the utmost respect for parole officers who do extraordinary work in our communities and sometimes under very difficult circumstances.

I know the member has raised the question with the parliamentary secretary. According to my understanding of the response from the parliamentary secretary, we are certainly very open to discussing this issue from British Columbia's perspective.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke a lot about the expertise of the people who sit on the Parole Board. However, we have noticed that there are flaws in the system, and that is what led to the current situation.

I would like to know whether the member thinks it is right that correctional officers gave a man permission to seek out sexual services despite his history of violence against women.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I think everyone in the House can agree that this situation should never have happened. Certain people chose to ignore the Parole Board's decision. Our government has decided to conduct an internal investigation into what happened. We are therefore asking members to wait for the results of that investigation before going forward with a study in committee.

[*English*]

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be speaking in support of the motion and sharing my time with the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

It is a motion that would not be necessary if public safety had been seriously considered. We are facing a tragic situation, which we simply cannot turn a blind eye to. Changes need to be made, and they need to be made right away.

A woman, Marylène Levesque, is dead, not killed by an escaped prisoner but by a violent killer out on day parole. We must ask how it was that Eustachio Gallese was on day parole in the first place.

In 2004, Mr. Gallese murdered his wife in cold blood by beating her with a hammer before fatally stabbing her with two knives. He was convicted in 2006 and sentenced to life in prison, with no chance of parole for 15 years. This wife killer should not have been eligible for parole until next year. How was it that he was out on day parole in the first place? Do court sentences matter anymore?

If it was not bad enough that he was on day parole, he also had no restrictions limiting his time with women. This was a man with a history of violence toward women, yet he was regularly out in the community consorting with female sex workers and he was violent toward them. In fact, he was banned from a massage parlour in the area for being violent and aggressive.

Then two weeks ago, he engaged with another sex worker, Ms. Levesque, in a hotel room and brutally stabbed her. This should not have happened. This woman should still be alive. Our correctional system, our parole system and the Liberal government failed Marylène Levesque and the public.

“Why” and “how” are the questions that Canadians are asking their government, and they deserve answers.

Actually, Canadians deserve more than answers. They deserve to feel safe in their communities and homes. They deserve to have a government that puts their safety first, not the sexual fantasies of a convicted wife killer.

Sadly, over the last four years we have seen too many times the system bending to criminals to give them more comfort, instead of providing victims with comfort. Whether it is allowing child killers to serve time in minimum-security healing lodges, or allowing wife killers unsupervised access to sex workers, criminal rights seem to come first under the current government.

It takes an outrageous act and a massive outcry before the government wakes up and does something. That action only lasts until a story is out of the headlines, and then we are right back where we started.

When this happens again, will we see some real action? I say when and not if, because it is probably only a matter of time.

Who will be the next victim? Who will be the next reoffender? Will it be Terrence Burlingham, who raped and murdered two young girls in the 1980s in British Columbia? In 2018, it was found that Mr. Burlingham posed a danger due specifically to the presence of sexual sadism, anti-social personality disorder and psychopathic features, yet Mr. Burlingham recently received permission for supervised absences.

Interestingly and sadly enough, back in the 1980s, Mr. Burlingham was under mandatory supervision orders arising from break-and-enter charges when he committed these grisly murders in the first place.

Will it be Shane Ertmoed? In October 2000, he murdered 10-year-old Heather Thomas of Surrey. He received a mandatory life sentence, with no eligibility for parole for 25 years.

• (1355)

Heather was visiting her father's Cloverdale townhouse. Three weeks later, her body was found floating in Alouette Lake located in my riding. Ertmoed told police he invited Heather into his townhouse, laid her down on the floor, removed her pants and underpants, and choked her while stifling her screams of protest.

He used his black football bag to carry her body along with her clothing to his vehicle and drove to Golden Ears Provincial Park before hiding the bag in dense forest. The next day he returned, re-

covered the bag, inflated a small dinghy and dropped the bag into the lake.

The faint hope clause under which offenders convicted of first-degree murder may apply for a reduced parole eligibility period after 15 years in prison was scrapped by the Conservative government in 2011. However, because this crime predated the law, he was eligible to apply for a hearing.

Heather Thomas, only 10 years old, could easily have been my daughter. Mr. Ertmoed worked in the townhouse complex next to ours and was very friendly toward my daughter and the girls she played with. They had a lemonade stand. They called him “the rocket”.

In our society, women deserve protection, and that is the objective of this motion.

• (1400)

The Deputy Speaker: When the House next gets back to debate on the motion, the hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge will have three and a half minutes remaining in his time for his remarks and, of course, the usual five minutes for questions and comments.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

CHANTIGNOLE SCHOOL

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, early in the year, École de la Chantignole in Bromont embarked upon a wonderful environmental impact reduction initiative.

January 10 saw the official launch of the “One, two, three, compost!” project that all classes are taking part in.

I would like to congratulate the students and teachers who distinguished themselves through the concrete actions they have taken to reduce waste by composting.

Set in motion by the teachers, the project is the result of a collaboration between the Brome-Missisquoi RCM, the City of Bromont, the school board and the school.

A green committee was created in order to get the students involved. These young people are true role models in the field of environmental protection, and this initiative will prepare them for taking on their role as responsible citizens.

In closing, I would like to congratulate the teachers and students of the green committee of École de la Chantignole in Bromont.

*Statements by Members**[English]***SHAWN PANESAR**

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour and recognize the life of Shawn Panesar of Renfrew, Ontario, who suddenly passed away on January 22 at the young age of 48.

Shawn was born in Renfrew. He followed in his father's footsteps, receiving his degree as a mechanical engineer from the University of Ottawa in 1996.

Shawn Panesar was a very successful and well-respected community leader, having spent his career managing thriving local industries, most recently with Nova Pole Industries of Renfrew. Shawn enjoyed the opportunity of serving the town of Renfrew. He was directly involved with his church for many years, delivered meals on wheels and was on different boards. He also gave back to his town with various donations at charitable events. He served as chair of the Renfrew Power Generation board.

Shawn is survived by his loving wife Wendy; his mother Sandra; his children Bennett, Asha and Lura; and his stepchildren Skylar and Emma. He will be missed by many aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, staff and employees.

We thank Shawn for his contribution to the life of our community.

* * *

SRI LANKA

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Sri Lanka has a long history of enforced disappearances, white van abductions and missing persons. I have met with many families of the disappeared who have been protesting each and every day for the last three years, demanding answers to the fate of their loved ones.

I met a teacher who handed over her husband to the Sri Lankan military in May 2009. She saw him and others get on a military bus. The men and women are still missing.

Last month the new president of Sri Lanka, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, concluded that those missing persons are dead. These assertions have sent chills and despair among the families, many of whom live in Canada.

The families are demanding answers. How does he know the missing are indeed dead? How did they die? Who is responsible for their deaths? The families need to know and in order to have closure and end impunity, a thorough, independent international investigation that leads to truth and justice is needed now more than ever.

* * *

*[Translation]***RENÉ LAFRANCHISE**

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on January 27, the people of Boucherville lost one of their own, a man affectionately known as Beau Blanc.

I would like to offer my condolences to his sister, Jeannine, who cared for him, and to the Lafranchise family. René Lafranchise's kingdom extended from Old Boucherville to the east end.

He never left home without his baseball cap and could be seen any time of day walking around the streets of Boucherville on the hunt for the bottles that he returned to the Messier Metro. He would then use his hard-earned pocket change to buy himself a little treat at Ketchup restaurant, Le Vieux pub or Bar de l'eau.

Beau Blanc had his own unique way of talking to people. Often peppering his speech with expletives, he would predict rain tomorrow with total conviction or tell kids to stay in school.

Sometimes misunderstood, his words were often surprising or shocking, but the smallest kindness was enough to bring a wonderful, childlike grin to his face.

Rest in peace, Beau Blanc. You will not be forgotten.

* * *

● (1405)

*[English]***UKRAINE**

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2014, Russia invaded Ukraine. Oleg Sentsov, a Ukrainian filmmaker, who is here with us today, was arrested on trumped-up charges of terrorism and sentenced to 20 years in a Siberian labour camp. In jail, as a protest he undertook a hunger strike, which lasted for 145 days.

Canada, led by our now Deputy Prime Minister, was at the forefront of the international effort calling for his release.

During his trial, Mr. Sentsov once said:

[Member spoke in Ukrainian and provided the following translation:]

I do not know what your convictions are worth if you are not willing to suffer for them or even to die for them.

[English]

As we speak, many political prisoners are suffering in jails in Russia. As we speak, Ukrainian women and men are dying defending their homeland from a Russian invasion.

As Canadians, we share these convictions.

Today, I hope that we draw inspiration from Mr. Sentsov's courage. I hope that we live by the courage of our convictions.

The Speaker: I want to take this opportunity to remind all members that it is not allowed to point to someone who is here visiting with us in the House.

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

**KAMOURASKA COMMUNITY FUTURES
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a thriving circular economy initiative in the Kamouraska region, one of the four RCMs in my magnificent riding.

The Kamouraska Société d'aide au développement de la collectivité has been leading this initiative for several years now, together with numerous regional partners. More than 526 tonnes of material have been diverted from landfill, roughly 501 tonnes of greenhouse gases have been prevented, and businesses have saved more than \$112,000.

The initiative was in the running in the “economic development” category of the Place Marketing Awards event being held this spring in Marseille.

I will shortly be setting off on a sustainable development tour of my riding to promote the initiatives in my region, and the circular economy will be part of that. It is a hidden gem that deserves to be shared.

Once again, I want to congratulate these visionaries back home who are making the environment a priority. I am very proud to represent them.

* * *

[English]

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is Black History Month.

In Hamilton the achievements of African-Canadian residents are celebrated at the annual John C. Holland awards. In 1954, Reverend Holland was our first-ever Citizen of the Year. In 2006, a poll of Hamiltonians named the Hon. Lincoln Alexander the greatest Hamiltonian ever.

Twenty-six years ago, a 16-year-old refugee from Somalia arrived in Hamilton, attended Sir John A. Macdonald High School, starred on the track team and quickly assimilated into Canadian life, so much so that he now sits in this House as a minister of the Crown and member for York South—Weston.

[Translation]

We are lucky to have a growing francophone population thanks to immigration from francophone African countries.

[English]

Judging by the young award winners and nominees this past Saturday night, Hamilton's black community will have many more leaders to celebrate as these young people take their place in all levels of Canadian society, the true legacy of Black History Month.

[Translation]

MARC-AURÈLE-FORTIN

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the House has resumed sitting, I will take this opportunity to thank the people of Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for once again putting their trust in me and allowing me to serve as an MP for a second term.

I intend to continue the work I began in my first term and therefore I pledge to continue working hard to defend the interests of the residents of Laval. I will ensure that their voices are heard here in Canada's House of Commons.

I want to especially thank my many volunteers, my incredible team and all the representatives of cultural communities, without whom this successful campaign would not have been possible.

I extend best wishes to everyone for a very successful 2020.

* * *

[English]

CANCER

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, half of Canadians are expected to be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. Today is World Cancer Day, a reminder as why we need to continue working toward a world where no Canadian fears cancer.

As a nation, we have made significant strides in cancer research, early detection and treatment. We have more people surviving cancer than ever before. The five-year survival for cancer has increased to 63%. However, a person's experience with cancer does not end just because the treatment is over.

The Canadian Cancer Society provides the largest cancer support system in the country and funds groundbreaking research so we can reduce the number of Canadians diagnosed with cancer.

Cancer touches all Canadians, whether personally or through family and friends. Today helps us remember why we need to keep working together to end cancer.

* * *

● (1410)

CANCER

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World Cancer Day, a day to raise awareness, honour survivors and remember those whose lives were lost to this disease. They are people like 14-year-old Ayverie Caster, the Toronto Raptors' number one fan who died before seeing her team win a world championship.

Childhood cancer remains the number one disease killer of children. On February 19, all proceeds from the Raptors' 905 game in Mississauga will be donated to childhood cancer research. Let us sell out the stadium in Ayverie's memory.

Statements by Members

Last year our government invested \$150 million into the Terry Fox Research Institute's Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres, an investment I am incredibly proud to have been involved with.

Cancer is a lousy disease that has touched all of us in this place. We continue to make strides, but so much more needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I say to my sister Jill, you have got this and I love you.

* * *

WINE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2018, following the Liberal government's introduction of an escalator tax, meaning an automatic tax increase for imported beer, wines and spirits, Australia requested a review at the World Trade Organization for Canada's exemption for 100% Canadian wines. The WTO draft report is anticipated in April, with the final legally binding report this summer.

This could have a catastrophic effect on some 400 Canadian wineries, including 32 in my community of Kelowna—Lake Country, forcing them to bear the burden of tens of millions of dollars in new taxes per year, putting this important industry and 6,000 Canadian jobs at risk.

The Conservative members asked the government to engage with Australia to resolve the dispute prior to the WTO ruling. The response from the minister responsible stated, "Australia's position on the excise duty exemption has been unwavering and clear." Basically, Australia drew a line in the sand, and the minister is saying, "What are you going to do?"

The government needs to take this seriously and come up with a plan for our wineries.

The Speaker: I want to take this opportunity to remind the hon. members that statements by members are taking place. I encourage everyone to listen, because they are very interesting.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Parliamentary Budget Officer released his review of the carbon tax. We have heard from Canadians across our country that the carbon tax is making life more difficult for Canadians.

Farmers are particularly struggling, as they have faced additional headwinds, including trade disruption, a wet spring and global pricing instability. To add insult to injury, we are now adding a tax on a tax. The GST is indeed being taxed on the carbon tax. I have a receipt from one of our local farmers, showing that in addition to paying \$7,000 in carbon tax, he has been told by the government that is not enough and that he has had to pay \$350 in GST on top of that carbon tax.

The most recent Parliamentary Budget Officer's report stated that the government collected over \$100 million in GST by taxing the carbon tax. If a bank tried to charge interest on interest, it would be charged with usury.

The government needs to give relief to the carbon scam. We need to give farmers a break.

* * *

● (1415)

OLD AGE SECURITY

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are wondering why proposed changes to the OAS benefits will leave behind those aged 65 to 74. Raising benefits for only those over 75 will not fix indexing problems, as the government promised seniors five years ago. This means living standards for seniors will continue to fall behind other Canadians, and the gap will grow faster for those between 65 and 74. Those relying the most on OAS benefits, like single seniors and women, will be hit the hardest.

This is unacceptable. The government is creating two classes of seniors. The increase should be applied to all people over the age of 65.

When the Conservatives raised the retirement age to 67, Canadians rebelled. Has the government found a crafty way to increase the eligibility age, smoothing the waters with a small increase for a limited number of seniors? Every senior in our country deserves a raise.

I ask the Liberals to abandon this proposal and come up with a plan that truly provides retirement security for all Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has recently been focusing on CUSMA's failure to protect aluminum workers. I want to reiterate that we will never forget that this agreement was reached at the expense of Quebec's dairy producers. It is scandalous that the government breached supply management three times in three consecutive agreements.

We will not rest until farmers are fully compensated for these three trade agreements. We will speak out against any future breach of supply management, starting with the imminent negotiations with the United Kingdom in the wake of Brexit.

There is a more immediate challenge we need to deal with before that. By preventing our producers from disposing of their surplus product, CUSMA could destabilize supply management. By ramming through the agreement, the government is doing more damage.

My message is simple: Our dairy producers and processors have paid enough. Enough is enough.

[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication, are guaranteed fundamental freedoms under section 2 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They are the foundation of a free and democratic society.

Last week, the BTLR panel submitted its report to government. Many of the recommendations are so shocking that the government must immediately take a clear and unequivocal stand against them. Saying it will not regulate news content or news organizations is not good enough.

The recommendations propose that the government regulate all commercial content on the Internet, both domestic and foreign. If adopted, these recommendations could lead to the largest regulation and restriction of free speech in Canadian history.

The Liberal government must make it clear that the report's recommendations on regulating and licensing Internet content are dead on arrival.

* * *

[Translation]

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Soraya Martínez Ferrada (Hochelega, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every February, Black History Month gives Canadians an opportunity to celebrate the heritage and contributions of the black community. Today, I would like to acknowledge some extraordinary black women who have helped create a diverse and inclusive Canadian society.

Jean Augustine, the first black female member of Parliament, was elected in 1993. Ms. Augustine was a passionate advocate for social justice. It was her motion, unanimously adopted in 1995, that led the federal government to create Black History Month.

Rosemary Brown was the first black woman to be elected to a provincial legislature and became the first woman to run for the leadership of a federal party in 1975. Ms. Brown fought hard against racism and sexism and worked to improve services for immigrants, persons with disabilities, seniors and marginalized groups.

I thank these black women, who, along with many others, paved the way for women in politics.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are all too familiar with the sordid details of Marylène Levesque's murder. Canadians are shocked that the government encouraged a murderer to seek sexual services. We need to shed light

Oral Questions

on this situation, but bureaucrats investigating other bureaucrats is not good enough.

Will the Prime Minister commit to supporting our motion and enabling the public safety and national security committee to investigate?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the concern about this tragedy, as I think all Canadians do. We want to make sure that we get the facts and get to the bottom of this. It is one of the reasons we have asked the two federal agencies involved to convene a board of investigation.

That board of investigation will feature two external vice-chairs, and it has been convened to examine the circumstances that led to this tragic event. As well, we have made a commitment that its findings will be made public and transparent.

We encourage a thorough examination of all aspects of this, but it is very important to focus on what actually happened rather than make presumptions based on misinformation.

● (1420)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what actually happened is that a violent murderer was encouraged to seek the services of a sex worker. That is unacceptable, and a parliamentary committee has the right and the obligation to do its work to find out what happened. Marylène Levesque did not deserve to die because of someone's decision like this.

Today, the Minister of Justice introduced a bill to require new sexual assault training for judges, but it is silent on training for members of the Parole Board.

Given recent events, will the government expand this training to ensure Parole Board members and parole officers receive similar training?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the bill that was introduced today is a very important one. I am encouraged to hear of the member's and his party's support for it.

We believe that training is very important. One of the things that will be examined in the investigation currently undertaken is to look at the policies, procedures and training currently available to all members who are involved in this activity. Therefore, we certainly support that where training is required, that it be made available and that it be effective in ensuring such a tragedy does not occur again.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are encouraged that the Liberals have decided to adopt our bill. Given his comments, we look forward to amendments that could be moved at committee to ensure the training is expanded.

Oral Questions

However, the fact remains that Marylène Levesque was murdered because of decisions made by people involved in approving release plans.

Therefore, I have a simple question. Are the people who approved a release plan that included a violent murderer getting services from a sex worker still hearing cases today?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that in this tragic case, the Parole Board actually issued rather explicit written instructions that this was not to occur. Unfortunately, and tragically, someone made that decision, and that individual will be held to account. Also, that individual is not currently involved in any decision-making with respect to any prisoner.

We will ensure we get the facts of this case and we will act on those facts to ensure this terrible tragedy never occurs again.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the government introduced a bill to ensure that judges undergo training on the subject of victims of sexual assault, but it could have included training for parole officers. The Prime Minister is well aware that the Parole Board of Canada has been in crisis for the past two weeks, ever since it gave its approval for a violent murderer on day parole to seek sexual services. How Parole Board members failed to recognize the potential danger of that strategy is beyond me.

Why did the government not include training for officers in its bill?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, last September, the Parole Board of Canada explicitly opposed letting the accused visit massage parlours while on day parole. At the same time, we have undertaken to do a comprehensive review of not only the facts and circumstances of this case to deal with any issues of misconduct, negligence or error, but also to examine our policies, procedures and training that direct the work of the Parole Board and others involved in these decisions to ensure that it is appropriate to prevent this from happening again.

We are very open to making changes to ensure that people have the appropriate training so the right decisions can be made.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I moved a motion calling for Parliament to condemn the Parole Board's decision to allow a violent murderer to receive sexual services.

We are also asking the Liberal government to instruct the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to conduct hearings into this matter.

Marylène Levesque did not deserve to come to this tragic end. We owe it to her to get to the bottom of this business. One question remains: How much longer will it take the Prime Minister to fire the two board members?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the first part of the motion brought forward by the member opposite, unfortunately he makes an assumption that is not supported by the facts.

However, let me be very clear that our government supports the full examination of this matter by the Standing Committee on Public Safety, and we will be supporting the motion for that reason.

* * *

● (1425)

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the new free trade agreement, the government's main, if not only, argument in recent days and weeks has been that the Premier of Quebec asked that it be ratified quickly.

There seems to be a burst of enthusiasm for what Quebec wants. I wonder whether this sudden enthusiasm will lead the government to also approve a motion unanimously adopted by the National Assembly on May 15, 2018, regarding a single tax return.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me reassure my colleague. There will be no single tax return.

Our government will continue to require federal tax returns in order to protect jobs in Quebec's regions and respond to francophones across Canada.

That is why we will continue working very hard with Revenu Québec, an important partner.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how odd to suggest that I or any member of the Quebec National Assembly would feel reassured.

Since the government has seen the light, I will quote the Premier of Quebec, who said, "We are again asking that bill 21 be respected and that the federal leaders promise not to participate in any legal challenges."

Those are François Legault's words.

Does the government now acknowledge the legitimacy of bill 21 on secularism?

Oral Questions

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said from the start that it is not up to the government to tell women what to wear or what not to wear, but we also said that we would closely monitor what was happening in Quebec.

There are Quebecers who are currently challenging the bill in court, and that is the right forum.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, why do the Liberals continue to fight first nations children in court? It is completely inexplicable.

[*English*]

Imagine being a parent whose kids are being denied services by the government, and that the very same government is spending over \$8 million fighting those kids in court. That is what is happening here. That is what the Liberal government is doing.

Can the Liberals explain to parents across this country why they are spending millions of dollars fighting kids in court instead of investing in their future?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree that we must compensate first nations children who were harmed as a result of government policies related to child and family services in the past. We want a solution that is both comprehensive and fair.

As my colleague knows very well, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordered the Government of Canada to begin discussions on a process for compensating victims of federal discrimination against first nations children, and that is what we are doing. Our target date for presenting an initial compensation model is February 21. That is what we are doing.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was in Regina yesterday to support the workers who are fighting for their pensions. Workers across the country are under attack.

[*English*]

Instead of helping working people, the Liberal government is proposing a tax cut that is going to help the top 10%. Workers need help now. There are millions of Canadians who cannot afford to pay for their medications. There are millions of Canadians who cannot afford to take care of their teeth. Will the Liberals stand up for these workers and help them and their families by investing in a national pharmacare program that is universal and by investing in a national dental care program that helps people who cannot afford to take care of their teeth?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's deep concern for Canadians who have been in the position, and still are, of having to make decisions between affording their medication or having enough food to eat. That is why our government took such strong action in our last mandate to actu-

ally move forward on the development of a national universal pharmacare program.

We continue to do that work. We have taken incredible steps toward that, and I look forward to the member's ideas on how to make sure that we reach our goal of ensuring that Canadians have the medications they need.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday officials confirmed two things: that the coronavirus can be spread through droplet transmission and that the government does not know where the plane that carried the original coronavirus patients into Canada is or if it was ever quarantined on its arrival in our country.

Can the Minister of Transport confirm the whereabouts of this aircraft today, and what measures, if any, were taken to ensure the risks of spread by droplet transmission to future passengers were mitigated?

• (1430)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure about the premise of the conversation.

I would like to assure Canadians that in fact it is correct that the virus is spread through droplets, and the plane will be completely clean upon arrival to transport Canadians. As well, Canadians will be screened—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I just want to remind hon. members that one question was asked. We cannot keep throwing questions and expect the minister to answer. We ask one question and we are getting an answer, so let us listen.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, let me start over. I do not understand if the member is asking about whether or not there are droplets on the plane, in the plane or in between passengers.

I will say this, though: As I outlined yesterday in the media, the plan is to ensure that passengers are safe, are transported accordingly, and are quarantined when they arrive in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): It is no wonder, Mr. Speaker; his question was for the Minister of Transport.

Yesterday, the minister said that the 27 passengers aboard flight CZ311 had been contacted and that they posed no risk to the public. The problem is that this type of aircraft can hold 300 to 350 passengers. The 27 passengers she is talking about were those who were within three metres of the two people infected with the coronavirus.

Oral Questions

At a time when the whole world is taking major precautions, how is it that the minister does not know where all the passengers are, what their current condition is and where the plane is located?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the clarity in the question. The member is referring to the plane that one passenger who was symptomatic came off.

As I mentioned in the House yesterday, all 27 passengers in his vicinity were screened and found to be negative, not carriers of the virus. The plane was cleaned according to infectious disease protocols in partnership with the airline, which would be doing that, I would hope, in between all flights, and certainly—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton Riverbend.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first the minister says “it will be” cleaned and then she says she “hopes it will be” cleaned. Where is the plane?

Yesterday the health committee learned that the government had not located the plane carrying the first confirmed coronavirus case. There is no knowledge of whether passengers immediately reboarded the plane or whether proper sanitation processes took place. Locating this plane is crucial.

Is there any chance that others travelling on this plane could have caught the virus and gone undetected?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the interesting elements of the coronavirus outbreak has been the spread of misinformation and fear across Canadian society. That was actually noted by an interviewer on the weekend.

In fact, she asked me how Canadians can be assured that they are getting the right information. One way might be if the opposition does not sensationalize the risk to Canadians and allows Canadians to understand where they can find a wealth of information.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Trans Mountain expansion moving forward is helpful, but the Liberals passed Bill C-69, and that means no private sector pipelines will be built or proposed in Canada again.

My constituents in Calgary Skyview are out of work, underemployed and losing hope because these Liberals cancelled northern gateway, killed energy east and delayed the Trans Mountain pipeline for years. One pipeline to global markets is not enough.

Will the Liberals listen to constituents and Canadians and scrap Bill C-69?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Impact Assessment Act was developed to ensure that good projects would move forward in the right way. We are very proud of the work that was done on the Impact Assessment Act. It will ensure that we are considering all of

the environmental effects and ensure that good projects actually do move ahead.

Of course, we were very pleased today to see that the Trans Mountain pipeline will be going ahead. That is an important project for the energy sector and an important project for all Canadians.

● (1435)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada got some very good news today. The Court of Appeal unanimously gave the green light to the Trans Mountain project. This is a victory for all Canadians, especially for energy workers.

It is also a victory for the current and future governments because Trans Mountain will generate \$21.6 billion in taxes during the construction period and the following 20 years of operation, which means that every minister will be able to spend.

What does the Minister of Canadian Heritage intend to do with his billions of dollars?

[*English*]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to answer the question by addressing the court's ruling today on TMX, because we know that in Canada in the 21st century, good projects can only move forward when we consult and address environmental concerns and the concerns of indigenous communities and local communities.

We know that there are a lot of diverse views on TMX. We know that there are a lot of divergent views on today's decision, but we remain steadfast in our commitment to TMX and to seeing that it moves forward in the right way by rolling up our sleeves and by doing the hard work. We are getting this project built.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today's court decision on TMX is welcome, but it is not enough. It was supposed to be in service two months ago, and the Liberals are losing \$20,000 a day. What is still missing is a concrete plan from them.

Legal threats remain. Here is what opponents have stated: Response will be “larger and more disruptive than last year” and “we're prepared to do whatever it takes to stop this pipeline” and “No matter who approves it, this pipeline will not be built.”

What will the Liberals actually do against these threats and when will they guarantee an in-service date for the Trans Mountain expansion?

Oral Questions

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, work on the greater Edmonton pipeline construction is under way. Work at the Edmonton terminal and the Kamloops terminal is under way. Work at stockpile sites at North Gate, Merritt, Enoch Cree and Edson is under way. Work at pump stations in Edson, Hinton and Black Pines is under way.

TMX is being built.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government just said that Bill 21 must be challenged.

The Deputy Prime Minister regularly cites François Legault's position on the CUSMA to avoid having to answer our questions about aluminum. My colleagues can see where I am going: We are going to take advantage of this unexpected opportunity.

Mr. Legault is calling for more authority over immigration. Quebec wants to make its own decisions about how many immigrants it takes in and how it will grant permanent residence. The province also wants to take full charge of the temporary foreign worker program.

Will the government finally agree to Quebec's legitimate demands?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we are indirectly talking about the free trade agreement, I remind my colleagues that this agreement is good for the aluminum industry. The fact that the aluminum industry, chambers of commerce, various stakeholders in Quebec, the Government of Quebec and Premier Legault all support it shows that there is consensus. The members of the Bloc Québécois are the only ones who do not.

I want to reach out to my friends in the Bloc Québécois. In Quebec, we say that we are stronger when we come together. Let us then come together and support the agreement.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, whenever the government wants to avoid having to explain why it left aluminum workers out in the cold, it holds up François Legault's words as gospel truth.

Logically, then, anything Quebec's premier says about health, which is under Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction, should be just as sacrosanct. François Legault has consistently demanded that the federal government increase health transfers enough to cover 25% of health care costs.

Will the government honour Quebec's request and increase health transfers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it looks like the Bloc is trying to make the point that the Liberal government is

not François Legault's government. I think everyone understands that.

There are issues on which we disagree with Quebec's premier. The fact that Quebec and Premier Legault do not always agree with us makes their strong support for the new NAFTA that much more significant. Like us, they understand that this agreement is good for Quebec.

* * *

● (1440)

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the launch of the \$186-billion Investing in Canada program, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has raised many questions about how the Liberals have managed it. Transparency, accountability and performance have been completely lacking.

Will the Prime Minister, who keeps telling anyone who will listen that he wants to work with the opposition parties, make a commitment to work with the Auditor General and give him the means to carry out this investigation that the House is asking him to do?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, openness and transparency are hallmarks of our government, and we welcome public and parliamentary oversight of our historic infrastructure program. I remind all Canadians that, in the last election campaign, the Conservatives wanted to slash \$18 billion from our infrastructure investments. Which projects did the Conservatives want to cut: the blue line in Montreal, the tramway in Quebec City, the Champlain Bridge or investments in affordable housing?

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, half of the funding she mentioned has yet to be invested.

Meanwhile, the Liberal government had no trouble coming up with \$10 million to give to Omar Khadr. It gave Loblaw's \$12 million to buy fridges. Since it loves credit so much, it gave Mastercard \$50 million. The House has spoken. The Auditor General must shed some light on the Liberal infrastructure fiasco.

Will the Prime Minister, who always finds money to toss out the window, commit to investing in the Office of the Auditor General so it can deliver on the task entrusted to it by parliamentarians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for pointing out just how important decisions based on facts and science are.

That is why the Auditor General's work is so important and why we invested so heavily in science and in government accountability, transparency and openness during our previous term, to ensure that Canadians, including Conservative Party members: have a better grasp and understanding of the considerable impact made by our infrastructure investments.

*Oral Questions**[English]***NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY**

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Liberal-appointed author of a report that recommended to regulate news media in Canada was quoted in an article as saying that the CRTC would be best positioned “to decide whether an outlet is practising journalism” and suggested it could judge which news outlets exhibit “journalistic independence” and, ergo, could be exempted from licensing and registration requirements.

Will the Prime Minister reject and condemn this assault on free speech?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes in a strong, free and independent press. The report we received last week from an independent panel specifically excluded news media from licensing requirements.

I want to be clear on our intentions: Our government will not impose licensing requirements on news organizations, nor will we regulate news content.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was code for “no”.

Yesterday, in response to a question on how he would define who would be regulated and licensed under their upcoming legislation, the minister spectacularly fumbled and said, “Media can be confusing.” Let me make it clear for him: There is no one in Canada who wants the press to be regulated by his government, the CRTC or any government outfit.

Will the Liberals condemn this flat out and uphold freedom of speech in Canada?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there seems to be quite a bit of confusion among members of the Conservative Party. On one side, the member for Durham said the report would be dead on arrival. On the other side, the member for Calgary Nose Hill said the report does not go far enough and promotes the status quo.

I am happy, however, that the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, for his part, shows a balanced position to work with us to promote Canadian culture, which is what we want to do on this side of the House.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have more proof today that the Liberals' choices have left Canada lagging behind on its climate targets. I meet people every day who want to do their part, but while the Liberals are letting big polluters off the hook, they are making it harder and harder for families to make ends meet.

When will the Liberals end all fossil fuel subsidies and commit to a real climate plan, a climate plan that actually cuts emissions and does not leave workers and communities behind?

• (1445)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government came to power and developed the first real climate plan this country has ever had, with 50 different initiatives that have identified over 275 megatonnes in reductions.

During the recent campaign, we pledged to go beyond the 2030 targets established under the previous government. We have committed to net zero by 2050. We are working to develop the pathways there, and we will be working with all Canadians to do that.

Climate change is an existential threat. We understand that. We know we need to do this for our grandchildren and our children. We are acting.

* * *

*[Translation]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, domestic violence and violence against women are evils that undermine our societies. On January 22, Marylène Levesque was placed in an extremely dangerous situation and was brutally murdered. Let us be clear. The facts show that the harm reduction approach and a rigorous parole process do work. However, in this case, a huge and incomprehensible mistake was made and a young woman paid for it with her life. Feminism is more than just fine words.

What practical measures will the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness put in place to ensure that such a terrible tragedy never happens again?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share, as my government shares, the concerns expressed about this tragedy and the loss of an innocent life in these circumstances and more broadly about the issue of violence against women. It is one of the reasons we are working very hard on a national strategy to reduce and eliminate violence against women.

I want to assure him we are equally committed to getting to the bottom of the facts in this case to make sure there is a full, frank, open and transparent examination of all the issues that gave rise to this tragedy so that action is taken to make sure it never occurs again.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have just spent the past several weeks back in my riding hearing from my constituents. By listening to Canadians and investing in the middle class, our government has put in place a plan built by and for all Canadians. We have already introduced a tax cut that would save millions of Canadians several hundred dollars at tax time.

Could the minister tell the House and Canadians about the next step in our plan to continue growing the middle class and our economy?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Laval—Les Îles for the work he is doing to listen to his constituents on how we can build budget 2020.

We are in the midst of doing our pre-budget consultations this year. We are listening to Canadians about things they think we should be putting in the budget and how we can keep the economy strong and resilient in the face of challenges.

In our budget, we will be working to make sure that we keep the middle class strong. We will be working to ensure that our environment is strong. We will be looking to make sure we keep Canadians safe and healthy and, of course, that we continue to reconcile with indigenous peoples.

I look forward to working with all members of the House on budget 2020.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take advantage of the presence of Canadian dairy farmers on the Hill this week to remind the government that it promised to conduct impact studies on the concessions made in previous free trade agreements. The government is about to ratify a new agreement, but it has still not disclosed the impact of those concessions. We keep asking for those studies, but we are not getting a response. The dairy industry is one of the hardest-hit sectors.

Will the government finally give Canadians answers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was a Liberal government that created the supply management system and it is a Liberal government that is preserving it. It is worth noting that the American government's goal at the beginning of the negotiations was to completely dismantle the system. This agreement will provide access to markets, but also the assurance that the future of supply management is secure. That is very good for Canada's dairy farmers.

[English]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been asking the Liberals to release all NAFTA-related economic studies and analyses since December 12, to no avail. As parliamentarians, Canadians entrust us to make deci-

Oral Questions

sions on their behalf and they expect us to have all the information to do so before we vote. The government's refusal to reveal the upsides and downsides of the new NAFTA is not the action of an open and transparent government.

What exactly are the Liberals trying to hide?

● (1450)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not hiding anything. We are very proud of the new NAFTA. Steve Verheul, the chief negotiator of this agreement, who is respected on all sides of the House, was made available to the Leader of the Opposition immediately after the protocol of amendment was signed.

When it comes to the economic analysis being prepared by the chief economist of Global Affairs, as soon as this analysis is complete, we will publish it and share it with all members of the House.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is time for the stubborn Liberal government to admit that its damaging carbon tax is crippling our farm families and communities. Our agricultural sector is world class and our producers pride themselves on being strong, great environmental stewards of their land.

When will the agriculture minister and her Liberal cabinet colleagues admit they have failed farm families and exempt agriculture producers from their income-stealing carbon tax?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the agriculture sector is very important to us and we work closely with the representatives of all sectors and my provincial colleagues as well.

We are listening and we are always ready to put practical solutions in place and improve our mechanisms. There are exemptions for fuel use by farmers for agricultural activities and also rebates on commercial greenhouse gas operations. We are there to support our farmers.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers pay an inordinate amount of the Liberal government's carbon tax directly through costs like heating and grain drying and indirectly through transportation, fertilizer and more. A recent analysis by APAS reveals that when the carbon tax hits \$50 per tonne in 2022, Saskatchewan producers will lose 12% of their net income to this Liberal tax.

Will the Prime Minister now admit that his carbon tax unfairly targets Canadian farm families?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we certainly recognize that 2019 has been a challenging harvest year for farmers in terms of climate and trade disruption. We are listening and we are committed to finding practical solutions to the issues that farmers face. We have taken numerous steps to ensure that the realities of the agricultural sector are reflected in our pollution pricing policy, including by exempting fuels for on-farm use.

I am certainly working closely with my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, to look at all options.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is citing François Legault's support for CUSMA to justify its inability to protect Quebec's aluminum smelters. I will take this rare opportunity where the authority of Quebec's premier is being respected in the House to quote him again.

Mr. Legault is calling for Quebec alone to conduct environmental assessments of projects on its territory. The federal government has to obey Quebec's laws like anyone else. That goes without saying, does it not?

Will the government respect Quebec's environmental sovereignty, or is the aluminum file the only issue on which the federal government agrees with the Government of Quebec?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree with the Government of Quebec on a whole host of issues. We get along well with Quebec. We collaborate and move forward together.

Take, for example, the cultural exemption clause in the free trade agreement that the Prime Minister of Canada defended. He fought for it, telling the Americans that it was a line we would not cross, that it was extremely important for our cultural sector in Quebec, for the Government of Quebec and for all the members on this side of the House. We stood up for aluminum, we stood up for every file, and we stood up for Quebec.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are using the Premier of Quebec's support for CUSMA to dodge our questions on aluminum. They should also recognize that when it comes to the French language in Quebec, it makes sense to invoke the Quebec government's authority. Because all Quebecers have the right to work in French, Mr. Legault is demanding that federally regulated businesses be subject to Bill 101.

Is the Liberal government finally going to comply with this Quebec requirement?

● (1455)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are 35 members from Quebec here who hold Quebec dear, and hold the French language dear. That is important. We have always stood up to protect our language, to promote it, to share it with others, because it is also the vehicle for our culture. Speaking of culture, let us come back to the importance of this agreement we signed. This agreement pro-

pects our ability to legislate to defend our culture. Let us talk about the fact that 70% of the aluminum has to come from North America. Let us talk about all the benefits, not only for Quebec but also for all Canadians. It still has not been—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement continues its campaign against Israel on Canadian campuses in Canadian cities. In my own backyard, when it first came about, some from the BDS movement called for sanctions against Jewish professors at McMaster University in Hamilton.

Given the alarming rise of anti-Semitism in Canada, North America and the world, could the Liberal government clarify whether it considers BDS to be anti-Semitic?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we always stand up for Canadian values and Canadian principles and we will continue to do so, not only in Canada but on the international stage.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a year and a half ago, my motion calling for the immediate listing of the IRGC as a terrorist entity passed the House of Commons with Liberal support. The minister voted to act and then failed to act.

Last month, the IRGC shot down a civilian airliner with two separate missiles, killing many Canadians. Canadians want an explanation from the government.

Why did the government choose not to list the IRGC?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain unwavering in our commitment to keep Canadians safe. We continue to work with like-minded countries to ensure that Iran is held to account for its support for terrorism. We have imposed sanctions on Iran and the IRGC, as well as on senior members of its leadership.

Canada has already taken a number of significant actions against the IRGC, including listing the Quds Force as a terrorist entity. Last year, we added three additional Iran-backed groups to the Criminal Code as terrorist entities.

The listing of entities is an ongoing process. Government officials continue to assess all groups and monitor new developments.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is just not true for the minister to say that the government has taken action against the IRGC. The Quds Force was listed by the previous Conservative government and that minister, along with the others, stood in their places and voted to “immediately” list the IRGC. They cast that vote over a year and a half ago.

Canadians want answers. It is a very simple question. Many Canadians were killed on this flight, and the government had chosen not to list the IRGC. People deserve to know. Why did the minister choose not to list the IRGC as a terrorist entity after voting a year and a half ago to immediately do precisely that?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the listing of entities is an ongoing process. We rely on government officials to continue to assess all groups and to monitor new developments—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sure the minister appreciates the coaching he is getting, but it is rather loud and I am not able to hear anything.

Hon. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, as I have already indicated, the Quds Force has already been listed by Canada as a terrorist entity. Last year, we took the additional step of adding three additional Iran-backed groups that were proxies for terrorist activities, and listing them under the Criminal Code.

We continue to engage in that process and to monitor developments as they become apparent.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year, Canada summer jobs created more than 70,000 opportunities for youth across Canada, with hundreds of small businesses and local organizations benefiting in Scarborough alone.

In my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, 242 summer jobs were created. The Canada summer jobs program creates valuable work experiences for youth across Canada, while helping them gain the skills and experience they need as they start their careers and successfully join the labour force.

Could the minister please update the House on this year's program and the benefits for both employers and youth?

• (1500)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for her dedication to Canada summer jobs.

Canada's prosperity depends on young Canadians getting the education and the experience that they need to succeed. That is why Canada summer jobs is such an important part of our youth employment strategy. We are providing young Canadians with paid summer jobs so they can gain valuable experience.

I am pleased to share that the application period for employers is open. I encourage all members to reach out to local organizations and small businesses, to make sure that all of their ridings benefit from this excellent program.

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GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was \$8 million for a temporary hockey rink, \$56,000 more for Jet Skis and meals for the Prime Minister's billionaire island vacation and \$1.5 million for Liberal ministers' office renovations. Now the Liberals have wasted almost \$2 million more on their UN Security Council seat bid, with a third of that going to promotional items. For what, Canada coffee mugs for Kim Jong-un and al-As-sad?

Why is the Liberal government so obsessed with wasting taxpayer dollars?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians who are watching know that Canada must show leadership in the face of major global challenges. More than ever, Canada is playing a positive role by being a champion of diversity and of inclusion, by addressing climate change, by leading peace and security efforts, and by helping the most vulnerable.

A seat on the UN Security Council would allow Canada to be a stronger voice on the international stage, fight for inclusion, fight for diversity and fight for Canadian values.

Oral Questions

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal job-killing policies are forcing Canadians to the food bank just to feed their families. However, while Canadians struggle, the Prime Minister has been wasting taxpayer dollars as he jets around the world.

New documents show that he spent over \$95,000 on food and drinks on just one international trip. He and his friends drank 57 bottles of wine and 35 cans of beer. I did not even get an invite.

Will the Prime Minister put an end to his wasteful spending habits and show respect to Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if my colleagues would like to listen, we are more than happy to invite the member if he wants to help us gain a seat on the UN Security Council.

We would like to get his voice, to have him work with us to bring Canadians' values to the international stage, to talk about climate change, to talk about our feminist foreign policy, and to bring positive leadership to the world.

That is what Canada is standing for around the world, and I would hope the member would stand with us in defending Canadian values around the world.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government says our democracy is threatened by foreign interference, but it looks like the bigger threat could be from the government.

The Liberals violated the Shawcross doctrine. They put Unifor on the media bailout fund. They introduced Bill C-76, limiting ads and free speech before elections. They tried controlling the House in Motion No. 6. They rigged the rules for their own benefit in the leaders' debates. Their Internet report is proposing what could be the largest restriction on free speech in Canadian history.

Last week, we found out the Liberals spent \$430,000 of public money on partisan social media in the last election. Who is the bigger threat to Canadian democracy?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin, the first time I take my seat and have the floor in this House, by congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, and thanking my former University of Toronto classmate for his question.

Our government is committed to an open and transparent democratic system.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, our colleagues in front are laughing. They are probably confusing the former Harper government's plan with what our government has done to make elections fairer and more accessible. We are proud of the work done by my predecessor, the minister of democratic institutions. It made elections fairer for every Canadian.

• (1505)

HEALTH

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, too many people in my riding of Cape Breton—Canso have been unable to find a family doctor or a primary care team. That means that many of my constituents have to travel to Halifax or other cities just to get a checkup or a prescription.

Can the Minister of Health please tell my constituents what the government is doing to help the provinces improve access to family doctors or primary care teams?

[Translation]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Cape Breton—Canso for his question.

[English]

Every Canadian should be able to rely on the health care system, yet more than five million Canadians do not have access to a family doctor or a primary health care team. We know there is more to do.

We are making significant investments, including more than \$40 billion to the provinces and territories this year, and we will keep working with partners like the province of Nova Scotia and the member for Cape Breton—Canso to make sure that all Canadians get the care they need, when they need it.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians take great pride in the peacekeeping and development work we do, but while Canadian aid organizations are drilling for water, international mining companies are flying the Canadian flag and poisoning the wells.

The Liberals said their ombudsman would solve this problem, but they gave it no teeth and are still inviting these companies to register here without fear of consequences.

When will the Liberals keep their promise to Canadians, to indigenous peoples, to human rights defenders and to communities around the world and give the ombudsman the power to do the job?

Business of Supply

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians and our global partners should be able to trust that our businesses are accountable and operating lawfully, responsibly and at high ethical standards. That includes our strong commitment to corporate social responsibility and the respect for human rights of workers and local stakeholders both in Canada and around the world. This is why we created the first-ever ombudsman for corporate social responsibility, to help reflect our core values in the world and to deliver on our trade agenda.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome comments from the environment minister that his government expects provinces to take responsibility for their emissions.

[Translation]

Last week, during oral question period, the Prime Minister stated that the government's decisions are based on facts and science.

[English]

Knowing that science is conclusive to the effect that we need to drastically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions without further delay, can the minister confirm to the House that Canada supports an international emissions credit regime based on real, verifiable emissions reductions, and that hypothetical proposals, such as those proposed by New Brunswick regarding Maritime Iron, would never be allowed?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly the issue of climate change is one on which I think we share a lot of common views with the hon. member's party. It is an existential crisis. We need to work very quickly to address that, both through achieving our targets in 2030 and exceeding them, but also with respect to moving toward net zero by 2050.

An international emissions trading regime is certainly part of that conversation. We were very clear at COP in Madrid that any international emissions trading regime would have to have integrity, would have to be transparent and would have to have no double counting. It would have to be able to show that emissions reductions were actually emissions reductions. That is our position.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to draw your attention to the conduct of the member for Spadina—Fort York during the question from the member for Lakeland. The member for Spadina—Fort York was mocking and mimicking the voice of our colleague, making fun of the way she speaks in the House. This member has worked hard to get here. She stands up for women across the country. The member should stand in his place and apologize for mocking the way she speaks.

• (1510)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I apologize for whatever I did during question period to anger the opposite side.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe if you seek it, you will find consent for the following motion: That notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-5, an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, be deemed read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—INSTRUCTION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Before we continue, I want to remind hon. members the debate is beginning and the hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge has three and a half minutes left in his speech.

The hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why is it that tragic crimes keep happening with criminals on parole? Madam Levesque has paid with her life. What is going on that we are putting our public at risk? Perhaps it is because of the changes the government made to the Parole Board in 2017. It is not just my colleagues and I who think this; Quebec Justice Minister Sonia LeBel is also demanding answers. She also questioned whether members of the Parole Board were sufficiently equipped to handle these cases.

[Translation]

According to Dave Blackburn, a former member of the Parole Board, of the 16 members appointed since 2017, only two experienced members were reappointed. That means there were 14 new people in these positions. In other words, most of the members had no experience in risk assessment and were not familiar with the parole process. That is an appalling situation that must change. That is why we introduced this motion.

Business of Supply

The Parole Board members appointed by the Liberals showed a serious lack of judgment in this matter, and they must suffer the consequences.

[*English*]

Past Parole Board members also said that Liberal changes in 2017 resulted in the majority of board members being replaced with people who had no prior experience.

Dave Blackburn, a former board member, told CTV, “If you don't have experienced board members and just new people, some mistakes can happen, some issues can happen.” Obviously, a very serious situation did happen.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, a great deal of members on all sides of the House have expressed their condolences to the family and friends of the late Ms. Levesque. I would like to re-echo those comments from this morning and earlier this afternoon.

Having said that, we have talked a great deal about the board that will be reviewing the internal board. It will come up with some tangible items that will add to the value of what has been recommended in this motion.

Could my colleague comment on the importance of having that internal review and the commitment by the government to ensure that it also becomes public information?

• (1515)

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Speaker, one challenge is that we believe this needs to go beyond the Parole Board examining the Parole Board. There needs to be outside examination by the committee so we can look at what led to this.

I would like to bring up a couple of points. The first is the watering down of what the Liberals are doing about public safety. Here are a couple of statistics they have tabled in the House as their goals. One is on the percentage of individuals or victims who are satisfied with the quality of service and timeliness of information provided. Right now it is 92%, but their goal is 80% for victims. There is less of a concern for victims as opposed to the perpetrators. Another is on the percentage of offenders who are on parole, but who have not committed a serious crime. Right now it is at 99% and the Liberals' goal is 96%.

Therefore, we have a watering down and a lack of concern. We are concerned as the opposition and as members of Parliament about the direction in which the government is taking Canada.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned that the appointment process was changed in 2016-17, and it meant that all the experienced board members were not renewed in Quebec. Basically, 10 board members from Quebec sent a letter to the Prime Minister and Michael Wernick in November 2017, expressing their serious concern about these changes. There also was a published opinion piece in *Le Devoir*.

Could the member comment on how important it is to immediately get going with this transparent, open process? The Liberals have voted in the past, unanimously, to do something, for example,

putting Iranian terrorist organizations on the list, but they do nothing about it.

Could the member please explain how important it is that we move ahead with this independent review process as soon as possible?

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Speaker, it is important because lives are at stake. There needs to be a real evaluation of our Parole Board and how criminals are being released oftentimes way ahead of even what the judges have said is not only a minimum sentence, but the minimum time before parole. Therefore, this needs to be examined and strengthened, not for political reasons but for the safety of Canadians.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to join in the debate today on this very important subject in the motion before us.

I want to recognize the excellent work of my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles. I know he works very hard on a wide range of public safety issues and he has played a key role in bringing this issue to the attention of Canadians and colleagues for an effective response to this tragic situation.

I will start by going over what we are talking about and then identify what the key issues for us as a Parliament are to grapple with coming out of this case.

The case is that Mr. Gallese was serving a sentence for murder. He was considered at risk of reoffending, but he was still released on day parole. In the context of that parole, he was given permission to have contact with women, but only for sex. He murdered a woman, Marylène Levesque, who herself was a victim of prostitution. She was murdered while Mr. Gallese was on day parole.

It is fairly obvious to anyone approaching this case that the Parole Board made a terrible decision and a woman died as a result of that decision. We are now having a debate in Parliament about what we can do specifically around reviewing and responding to this case and, in particular, trying to restore public confidence in the Parole Board's process.

We expect the Parole Board to make difficult, finely tuned decisions in response to the situations that are in front of it. Declaring that someone is not at risk of reoffending, if someone has been effectively rehabilitated, then it is in the public interest for that person to be released and reintegrated in society. However, if people remain a risk of reoffending, if there is a risk to people in society of them being out or if there are specific conditions that need to be imposed on them when they are released to ensure they are not a risk to other people, then the Parole Board needs to be aware of that and impose those conditions.

All of us entrust our safety and the safety of our families to the hopefully expert people who are part of these Parole Board hearings. We need this process and we need to be able to trust and have confidence in this process. We need to know that the people who serve on the Parole Board are able to consider the evidence, consider the information and make good decisions. That means they have the required amount of experience, background, qualifications, etc.

When we confront a decision that was made by the Parole Board that was clearly very bad, the implication is that this criminal was being advised to engage in criminal activity, that is the purchasing of sex, that part of his release plan involved a direct admonition to or an implied direction to commit criminal activity. As a result of this failure by the Parole Board, a woman lost her life.

If we are to talk about the Parole Board and how to address these issues, we have to hold the government accountable for the appointment decisions it makes. The government was not directly responsible for this decision, but it was responsible for the process and the appointments to the Parole Board that led to this decision being made.

When we talk about how the Liberals arrived at the appointment decisions, did they make decisions about Parole Board appointees that, all things considered, anyone would have made under the same circumstances, or did they fail to consider important factors? Did they make decisions that were not in the public interest in the context of appointments that led to this decision?

Personnel is policy as we all know as members of Parliament. The Liberals' decision to appoint certain individuals and to have a certain appointment process led to a policy, which was the release of someone who should not have been released, especially with direction and in the context where women would be put at risk.

It has been interesting in the context of the debate that has happened so far today, the discussion about the Parole Board's process and the appointments. Certainly on our side of the House, we have suggested that part of the problem is in the changes the government made to appointments. A couple of years ago, the Liberals made the decision to not reappoint the vast majority of the people on Quebec's Parole Board, who were experienced, and instead appoint 14 out of 16 brand new members to that board.

• (1520)

The government established the conditions in which we had a Parole Board that was lacking in experience. We have challenged them on that. This was a boneheaded decision that resulted in somebody losing their life, and it followed a decision by the government to change the appointment process dramatically, removing experienced people and replacing them with inexperienced people. Maybe we should consider the role that the changes in the appointment process played in the tragic outcome.

The government's response has been to trumpet the alleged greatness of its appointment process. It has said it brought in an open and transparent process, based on merit, increasing diversity, and that it is great, better than the previous system, which was all about appointing, allegedly, partisan hacks to these positions.

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I would say any evaluation of the merit of an appointment should consider the quality of the work and the decisions that are made, in other words, the government might profess to have brought in a great appointment system but we can only evaluate the quality of that appointment system by the outcome of that appointment system, namely, did the people appointed to the Parole Board make decisions that were in the public interest?

The government's decision to replace experienced people with inexperienced on the Parole Board, and that being followed by the decision that we had here, suggests that the government was not as effective at identifying merit in appointments as it claims to be. It suggests that perhaps there were other things going on.

I would respectfully encourage the government to approach this with a little humility, not to say, out of the gate, that everything is fine with the appointments process, but to actually acknowledge that, following a bad decision of the Parole Board, a person being killed, maybe it needs to go back and ask if it made sense to replace the entire Parole Board. The outcome of the appointments the government makes should be the basis on which we evaluate the quality of those appointments.

The other point that the government has made in the context of the appointment process is that it is about diversity, that it wants to make these organizations more diverse and maybe that is the justification for not reappointing people who were there before, to try to make these organizations more diverse.

I would say that kind of rhetoric actually does a great disservice to the genuine importance of making our public organizations more diverse. On this side of the House, we agree in the importance of having diversity in public appointments. When that is used as an excuse, when that is the rhetorical basis for appointing 14 of 16 people to this board who did not have the experience, and the result of that being this bad decision, again, I think a little more introspection of the policies and processes is needed.

What we are calling for as a result of this situation, in this motion, is:

That the House: (a) condemn the decision of the Parole Board of Canada.

Again, when the Parole Board is sending the message to somebody who is being released that they should go and commit illegal activity, namely purchasing sex, it should be fairly obvious that there were many problems in the process of that person being released and the instruction they were given.

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Any expert, anybody who had spent substantial time working on these issues, would tell us that telling a person who had a history of violence against women to interact with women in this context was the kind of advice that really lacked any kind of wisdom, knowledge or experience. It lacked a connection with the kind of evidence-based policy-making that we would expect in this place.

The motion starts by condemning the decision of the Parole Board, and then it instructs the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to conduct hearings into this matter, and particularly to look at the issue of the nomination process. The idea being then, as our motion states, “to recommend measures to be taken to ensure another tragedy such as this never happens again.”

Part of it is the government needs to do much better in the area of appointments. Maybe the government wants to throw out people who were appointed previously and be able to appoint their own people, but when, after these appointment changes, a person loses their life, the government needs to be held accountable for those appointment decisions.

We, as an opposition, call on the government to do much better in the future.

• (1525)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech today with interest. I was particularly struck by his comments about the partisanship of the appointment process and how he tried to characterize it as though that was not the situation with the former government and that he is concerned about the way it is being done now. I am not going to disagree with all of the points because at the crux of what he is getting at, there is some merit when talking about making sure that people are properly qualified.

The reality of the situation is that what we saw under the previous Conservative government, as an example, in Quebec, was that six out of the nine full-time commissioners were Conservative Party supporters. Can he at least not recognize that there is some concern when six of nine of the permanent full-time commissioners are supporters of the Conservative Party?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I do not know if what he says about the previous Parole Board is true, but the public would expect a Parole Board that does not make the kinds of absurd, boneheaded, dangerous decisions that the current Parole Board has made. We should ask the public to choose between a Parole Board that had more or fewer supporters of one party and a Parole Board that made the kind of decision that was made in this case.

Whatever criticisms the member might have had about the previous Parole Board, it did not make this decision. This decision was made by 14 of 16 brand new Parole Board members, some of whom clearly lacked the experience, the background and the wisdom to make the right decision. The proof is in the pudding on the appointments process. If the appointments process were working, there would not be decisions like this.

• (1530)

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

Speaker, to pick up on the point, the regional vice-chair was a Conservative appointment and a Conservative candidate. That person is responsible for the training. Before new individuals are handed the case files, that individual is responsible for ensuring that they have been sufficiently trained to do what is expected of them.

As opposed to trying to blame the Government of Canada and say it is at fault, which is what the Conservatives are saying, would they not acknowledge that instead of blaming the government, which is not at fault, we should try to prevent this from happening in the future?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, let us be very clear that a person lost her life because of a terrible decision by the Parole Board. That decision was made by inexperienced Liberal appointees to the Parole Board. The parliamentary secretary is heckling me to remind me of his question, which I just heard, that apparently was that a Conservative candidate served on the Parole Board. We did not have decisions like this under that Parole Board.

It really shows the shamelessness of the parliamentary secretary, that when we are having a discussion about somebody losing her life as a result of bad decisions made by Liberal appointees, the member turns it around to try to criticize Conservative appointees, who, in reality, did not make the kinds of bad decisions that forced us into this conversation today.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about the proof in the pudding. Day parole revocations for violent offences in 2012-13 were six and the parole revocations for violent offenders in 2017-18 were two, not six. Similarly, with full parole, there were seven in 2012-13 and only three under the new process. Therefore, the proof in the pudding is that there are fewer revocations under the current system than the previous.

Could the hon. member comment on that, please?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, as the member should know, just because someone's parole is revoked, it does not mean that the individual committed a violent crime against another person. It may be that other conditions of the person's parole were violated. In this case, somebody actually lost her life because of a bad decision by the Parole Board. The member is using numbers to make a point that those numbers do not actually make at all. That should be quite clear.

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Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to pick up on where that conversation was leaving off. Perhaps part of the problem here is that on this side of the House, we do not look at them as political appointments. That is why the previous member is saying things such as “a Liberal appointment”. It would take somebody who is used to being in that system of appointing people from their own side, as I will talk about in my speech, to look at it through that kind of lens, but—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands has the floor. I would ask members to write down their questions and comments they may have, as opposed to shouting them across the room and laughing through the process. This is a serious matter and I would ask members to provide the respect that the person who has the floor deserves.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I will pick up on a lot of this in my speech. I am happy to answer any questions from those members who will be taking notes during that time.

At the outset I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

I rise today to join my colleagues in expressing my deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Marylène Levesque, following this heinous and reprehensible tragedy.

In the aftermath of events such as these it is imperative that an investigation occurs to provide the public with the trust and knowledge that these errors will be addressed. That way we can ensure changes are made to better prevent similar occurrences from happening again. As the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has said in the House, there will be an administrative review and investigative committee assembled by the Parole Board of Canada and the Correctional Service.

To ensure accountability, two co-chairs will act as external investigators to oversee the review. In addition, the Quebec City police service is currently in the midst of a criminal investigation. On both sides of the House, I have no doubt that we all want to see the results of these investigations. The minister has publicly committed to making the findings public once the administrative process is complete. With the findings, committee members will be able to review what went wrong and make recommendations.

Regarding the motion before us today, it is important to note that the Parole Board of Canada issued an order that Mr. Gallese not be permitted to visit massage parlours. With this investigation, we will find out whether the orders were followed and, if not, the reasons for disregarding them. A serious and tragic error was made.

However, I will caution my Conservative colleagues from trying to declare that there is a wide-ranging and systemic problem. Violent offences such as these are not common in Canada, more so in recent years. In 2013-14, there were 17 convictions for a violent offence committed by a person on day parole. In 2017-18, there were five. However, five is still too many.

I would also inform the members opposite that our commissioners are highly qualified, with many experts in legal, correctional

and criminology fields. Once appointed, the new commissioners receive rigorous training in risk assessment, hearing management, decision-making and addressing the specific factors that apply to certain types of offenders. After this initial training, the new commissioners are paired with more experienced commissioners. If necessary, they return for additional training. It is only when the regional vice-president is satisfied that they are ready are they allowed to sit and make decisions. All commissioners receive annual training on risk assessment, so that they can refine their skills and remain in a continuous learning mode.

When the Conservatives question the merit of the Parole Board appointees, let us remember that 43 appointments made by the former Harper government had ties to the Conservative Party. A number of former Conservative candidates, Conservative donors, assistants to former Conservative ministers and deputy Conservative ministers were included.

This is not intended to question the qualifications of any of these members, but when Conservatives openly question the appointment process, it is interesting to remind Canadians about how they often referred people to prominent positions. This was considerably pronounced in Quebec, as I previously mentioned, where at the end of the former Conservative government, six of the nine full-time commissioners were Conservative Party supporters.

Since forming government we have placed value on expertise, experience and diversity. All must have the qualifications for such a demanding position. The main objective of the entire correctional and conditional release system is to promote public safety. It is the primary responsibility of any government and I am sure that all in the House would agree.

Since forming government we have also worked tirelessly to address and combat gender-based violence, which is particularly significant in this case, considering the tragic death of this young woman.

● (1535)

I therefore invite the members of opposite parties to support our strategy to prevent and counter gender-based violence, which puts in place preventative measures, supports for survivors and the facilities to develop research and the dissemination of knowledge. I invite my colleagues to support the increase in legal aid to help victims of sexual harassment at work. I invite them to support the increased funding for training, ethics and conduct of judges in the area of gender-based violence, sexual assault and family violence. I invite them to support the funding to prevent violence in dating relationships during adolescence, to fight against bullying and to combat sexual violence in post-secondary institutions.

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I know we all want our communities to be safer. We want women like Marylène Levesque not to find themselves in vulnerable situations and to have the resources and supports they need. We want to shed light on what happened in this tragic case to prevent it from happening again, but our analysis and corrective measures should be based on facts.

• (1540)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, at the end the member for Kingston and the Islands spoke about various initiatives to address violence against women and gender-based violence in general. He should know that all colleagues in the House are interested in working together with the government. We had a bill tabled in the House that addresses the issue of training for judges around sexual assault. This was a bill put forward by the Conservatives as a private member's bill in a previous Parliament.

Today we have highlighted that in light of this specific case, it would be worthwhile to include training for parole officers on these issues as well. We want to work with the government not only to support these types of initiatives but also to improve them to ensure they have a greater impact.

When it comes to the issue of appointments, members can talk about their policy, but personnel is policy as well. Whatever one says about the political background of individuals, it is the government that chooses to appoint people. It makes that choice, and we have its decision.

Does the member think there should be some reconsideration of the appointment decisions they made, especially replacing experienced people with inexperienced people and the result of that decision?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am so glad the member brought up that former bill that was introduced into the House by Ms. Ambrose.

Let us be honest about why it did not make it through in the dying days of Parliament. If my memory serves me correctly, there were about 12 to 13 private members' bills that were sitting in the Senate, but unfortunately, for partisan reasons, the Conservative senators decided to hold up those bills. That is why Ms. Ambrose's bill, which the member referenced, did not get through the Senate.

I hope that bill is reintroduced, and I saw somewhere that it will be or might be, so that legislation like that can be adopted. It is incredibly important to make sure the resources and supports and proper training are in place so that we can move forward and make sure that people are able to deal with potential situations when they are in front of them.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kingston and the Islands and also the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. At lunch today, we had a brief conversation about the independence of the Senate, the independence of the judiciary and the Supreme Court. This is another case in which we need a separation of politics from correctional services through the order in council process, and the independence of that process, so that we are not getting political people

put in the place to make decisions relating to the treatment of people under judicial care.

Could the hon. member discuss the importance of the separation of the political process from the judicial process?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, what I would really like to pick up on is the member for Guelph's comment with respect to the need for independence as it exists out there. It is not easy to create an independent Senate. It is not easy to not want to pick from political affiliations, as the Conservatives did last time.

I am from a riding that used to have seven but now has six correctional institutions, thanks to the former Conservative government, in the surrounding area. We have a lot of people who are involved in the Parole Board in my riding. Never once have I been contacted and asked which Liberals we could fill into the slots. It does not work like that. The process we set up wants people to have the skills and qualifications to fulfill the roles they are appointed to. It is not based on who they support during an election or who they decide to support financially in terms of donations to political parties.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, we know why the member for Kingston and the Islands is not asked. It is because the Liberals keep a good database. The Liberal list provides them the information they need to be able to make those appointments, as we found out during the last session.

To the matter at hand, with this specific case, can the member tell us what other instructions or conditions were a part of the accused's release plan in this tragic circumstance?

• (1545)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, naturally, it would take a Conservative to connect a political database back to the functions of government and Parliament. It takes a Conservative to do that because Conservatives were used to doing that. Theirs was called CIMS or something like that. Maybe when they needed to make an appointment, they would just go back to their program and dig somebody up.

I am not surprised that a Conservative was so quick to jump to his feet to say that we go to the Liberal list, because that is what they are used to doing. I am sorry; that is just not the way that it works here, despite the fact that the member would like to set it up a different way.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again let me express my deepest sympathies for the family and friends of Marylène Levesque for this terrible tragedy that took place in Quebec on January 22.

As members across the way are aware, we have called for an investigation into the circumstances that led to this horrible incident. It will be a joint board of investigation that will draw its members from the Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board of Canada, including external members.

The Correctional Service of Canada must conduct an investigation under a variety of circumstances, including when the presumed perpetrator of a murder is a federal offender. As the House may be aware, a criminal investigation is also being carried out by the local police. This will protect the integrity of the investigations so that all facts can come to the surface and be properly examined by experts.

This board of investigation will assess and report on the incident so that where required, actions can be taken to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future. This board will have five members, two who are external and independent of the government, two from the Correctional Service of Canada and one from the Parole Board of Canada. All members are skilled and experienced, bringing various perspectives to this process. The two external members are experienced criminologists who have never been employed by either the Correctional Service of Canada or the Parole Board of Canada. In the spirit of openness and transparency, these external members will co-chair the board.

It is a government priority to better understand the circumstances that led to this tragedy to ensure that all established protocols were followed and that lessons are learned. Once the board concludes its investigation and provides its report, we will respond accordingly. We are committed to conducting the investigation swiftly and communicating the results with the public. We want answers, as does everyone affected by this, including the members in this House.

We cannot lose the perspective that our system is built on evidence-based approaches. The work of the Correctional Service of Canada is guided by research and long-standing experience of what works best to assist in the rehabilitation of individuals while ensuring that the public is safe. Public safety is the main consideration in all parole decisions. These decisions are made independently by the Parole Board, based on criteria that have been in place for many years and under many governments.

I want to assure Canadians that violent offences by people on day parole are incredibly rare. In 2017-2018, out of over 3,836 people on day parole, only two had their day parole revoked for a violent offence. This means that 99.95% of people successfully completed day parole. Additionally, research shows that the recidivism rate in Canada is declining.

Day parole is part of a process of gradual, supervised release. This is a far safer process for Canadians than releasing offenders cold turkey, straight from prison, without monitoring or supervision of any kind. In fact, research tells us that a gradual, structured and supervised release is the best way to protect the public. Conditional releases like day parole contribute to the protection of society by facilitating the reintegration of the offender into society as a law-abiding citizen.

In this specific case, which is very tragic, every angle around day parole will be examined to determine whether established policies and procedures were followed.

In closing, I thank the member across the way for raising this important issue and assure the member that the government is committed to getting to the bottom of what caused this to happen. With this investigation, I want to reiterate that the protection and safety

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of our communities is of paramount consideration in all decisions relating to the management of federal offenders.

• (1550)

However, we also must talk about the systemic nature of violence against women. We must go above and beyond to ensure that we are combatting the gender-based challenges that women and vulnerable gender communities within our society face on a daily basis, whether it is through human trafficking, gender-based violence in the home, domestic abuse or workplace discrimination. In continuing to develop and grow our communities to become safer for each and every one of us, we have to take into account all of these different factors. Our approach to combatting these challenges must be thorough and comprehensive, taking into account all of the different angles and perspectives that cause tragedies like these to occur.

In the past four years, our government has really gone above and beyond in how we are combatting gender-based violence, in how we are reforming our justice system so that there is more access for vulnerable communities. That is work that will continue within this government, within our ministry and with the members across the way on issues that they raise as well.

Again, I want to express my deepest sympathies to the family of Marylène Levesque. May she rest in peace.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to make a point regarding the statement that was just made about how rare it is for crimes to be committed during parole and how things are getting better. The Liberals' own records, which the minister has provided, contradict the member's statements.

For example, the rate for convictions resulting in death in 2015-16 was 0.48% per 1,000 offenders under supervision. Then it went to 1% the following year, and the Liberals have increased the target now to 0.64%. They are actually making it easier. They are reducing their standards. They are making it so that there is less control.

The rate of convictions for serious violent offences for per 1,000 offenders under supervision in 2017-18 was 20.7%. The target is currently 35.8%. It is quite different from what the member is saying. I would like her to respond to that.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, numbers do not lie, and as I said in my statement, statistics show that recidivism has decreased. The 2017-18 numbers are significantly lower than they were, for example, in the Harper government era.

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As I also said in my remarks, we have to continue to take a comprehensive approach to combatting issues like these. We have to make sure that there is enough support for the public to feel safe and that there is enough support for offenders to be able to transition into society so that the public is safe.

If we are talking just about black and white numbers, I do not think that is the right approach. We have to take those numbers in the context of the whole. We have to make sure that we are using evidence from the past years and establishing and growing our communities and our policies and our reforms based on what we see happening in society and what is in the best interests of our communities.

• (1555)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her very logical presentation. This is a heinous crime and it should not be politicized. I am sad to see so much political bantering from the party that has put forward this motion. We should all show leadership. We should ensure that violence against women is curtailed.

As she is the chair of the Liberal women's caucus, I would like the member's thoughts on how we can implement some policies that will alleviate these problems.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's very well-informed question. She is absolutely right that we must do so much more to combat violence against women and that the tragic nature of this crime is very systemic in how we tackle this issue.

It is very unfortunate that members across the way are politicizing this tragic death of Marylène Levesque. This is not something to be politicized. This is something that we use as an example to bring us all together and move forward to find ways to make sure that these kinds of tragedies do not happen again. One of the ways we can do that is to focus on how we combat violence against women and on how we rehabilitate offenders in making them part of our community and our society.

Over the past four years, we have made historic investments in combatting gender-based violence. We have provided more support for front-line workers so that shelters have more support and are able to take in more women fleeing violence. We have provided a human trafficking initiative and the national task force, and we created the hotline for human trafficking to ensure that women have the support they require so that we can work together and combat this issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this motion. I would have preferred never to have to rise on a motion like this, and I believe everyone in the House is of the same opinion.

I will start with some statistics by way of background. Police data from Quebec for 2012 show that women accounted for 80% of victims of offences committed in a domestic context, 96% of sexual assault victims and 93% of spousal homicide victims. These data come from the Fédération des femmes du Québec.

According to the Canadian Women's Foundation, the cost of domestic violence against women was approximately \$7.4 billion in 2009. This figure includes unexpected costs such as emergency room visits and loss of income, tangible costs such as funeral expenses, and intangible costs such as pain and suffering.

It has also been reported that half of all women have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16. In addition, 67% of Canadians say that they have personally known at least one woman who has experienced physical or sexual violence.

According to 2014 figures, on any given night in Canada, 3,491 women and their 2,724 children sleep in shelters because it is not safe at home. On any given night, about 300 women and children are turned away because shelters are already full.

I should mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

According to the RCMP, there were 1,181 cases of missing or murdered indigenous women between 1980 and 2012. However, according to grassroots organizations, the real figures are much higher. Indigenous women are killed at six times the rate of non-indigenous women.

Among seniors, women are at greater risk than men of experiencing violence from a family member. Women account for 60% of senior survivors of domestic violence.

Saskatchewan and Manitoba, which consistently record the highest provincial rates of police-reported violent crime, had rates of violence against women in 2011 that were double the national average.

Ontario and Quebec have the lowest rates of violence against women.

Cyber-violence, which includes online threats, harassment and stalking, has emerged as an extension of violence against women. Young women between the ages of 18 and 24 are most likely to experience online harassment in all its forms.

The Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes reports that 25% of female victims have been beaten, 20% have been choked, 13% have been threatened with a weapon and 20% have been sexually assaulted.

There is a very big difference for men, for whom the percentages are 10%, 4%, 8% and 3% respectively. This means that three times more women have been beaten than men, five times more women have been choked, twice as many women have been threatened with a weapon, and seven times more women have been forced into sexual relations.

Why am I giving all of these statistics? Today, it is more important than ever that women who are victims of violence have full confidence in the justice system. Women must not be afraid to go to the police to file a report. Women need to have confidence that their assailants will be tried.

The word “confidence” is very important. If we want to eliminate this scourge, women need to have confidence in the justice system. That brings me to today's motion.

That the House: (a) condemn the decision of the Parole Board of Canada that led to a young woman's death by an inmate during day parole in January of this year; and (b) instruct the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to conduct hearings into this matter, including a review of the changes made by the government in 2017 to the board's nomination process, with the view to recommend measures to be taken to ensure another tragedy such as this never happens again.

Changes were made to the appointment process. The confidence I mentioned earlier was destroyed. Why anyone decided to appoint people with no experience to the board is beyond me, but the fact remains that a mistake was made in 2017 and, sadly, a woman has now paid the ultimate price for that mistake.

Is it partisan to say that a mistake needs to be fixed today? The answer is no.

• (1600)

That is far from being partisan. We must fix the mistake that has resulted in board members not having the necessary training to make a decision like the one that was made. That is the real issue.

Once again, I will repeat that it is a matter of confidence. How can we address this problematic situation, which affects all of us directly or indirectly, if women who experience any form of violence do not have confidence in the system?

That is the reality, and that is why we are having this debate today. We believe that it is important to investigate this matter and this mistake so that this never happens again. We want parliamentarians to be able to put the right questions to all the people directly affected by this decision.

We cannot respond to this type of situation as we would respond to a simple theft of paper and pencils. Had we caught an official stealing paper and pencils, we would have asked his manager to look into it and find out why he did it. That is what is known as an administrative review. Paper and pencils can be replaced. A life cannot.

A serious mistake was made by the system. The system did not work, because it did not protect Marylène Levesque, and that is incomprehensible.

It is normal for parliamentarians on this side of the House, and from all parties, to want to ask questions. We should all want to know what happened so that we can do everything we can to ensure it never happens again. There is nothing partisan about asking questions.

We cannot ask people who are part of the system that created the mistake to investigate their own mistake. Certain questions will not be asked. That is human nature. Humans are bound to protect themselves and their sector, their office and their department. They will inevitably turn a blind eye to certain things. They will not see all the mistakes that have been made. That is where it differs from an external, independent inquiry conducted by a parliamentary committee. Such an inquiry will allow us to ask the questions that these people may not want us to ask.

Business of Supply

We are here today to request the support of all parties in the House in order to shed light on these events.

We have talked a lot about the case of 51-year-old Mr. Gallese. In 2006, he was convicted of murdering his wife with a hammer after stabbing her repeatedly. He was granted day parole with conditions that I never thought I would see in my entire political career. He was given permission to use the services of an individual to have his sexual needs met in exchange for money, even though his record indicated he was likely to reoffend. He was given permission to do something illegal. The absurdity of the situation is unbelievable.

I have heard from many people who simply cannot understand what happened. They do not understand how the Parole Board members could have made a decision that put a woman in danger, when most ordinary people would have been capable of understanding that this man had a problem with women and that there was a risk that something could happen. Women, Canadians and parliamentarians put their trust in the two board members who allowed this tragedy to happen.

I would like to offer my condolences to all the victim's family and friends, as well as to all sex workers in this country who do a job that no one here would want to do. Whether they do it by choice or not is their business. Today we owe them respect and answers.

The government must adopt this motion to shed light on this situation to ensure it never happens again.

• (1605)

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a simple question for the hon. member across the way.

In his speech he mentioned that board members had not received adequate training to take on the role of board member. Can he describe the training that board members are currently getting and tell me whether it has changed since we came to power?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the answer to that question is so obvious I do not understand how my colleague across the way does not see it.

The board members made that decision because they did not get the necessary training. They did not have the necessary means, experience and skills to fulfill this role. That is the reality. Enough with the nitpicking. The reality is that those two individuals should no longer hold that position. They were poorly trained. They were incompetent and should be dismissed.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Conservatives for bringing this opposition day motion forward today. It gives us an opportunity to rightfully condemn this decision and to ensure that we take measures to prevent it from happening again.

Would the hon. member care to comment on the fact that this individual was attending a massage parlour that he had been banned from for violence against the women there, and it was impossible for them to report that violence because operating that place was, in fact, a crime brought in by the current government? This individual's parole could have easily been revoked because of this, but that did not happen.

Does he not agree that something needs to be done about that law?

• (1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, here is an excerpt from the Parole Board's report: "During the hearing, your parole officer underlined a strategy that was developed with the goal that would allow you to meet women in order to meet your sexual needs. Your case management team gave permission for such meetings provided that you were transparent."

How can somebody be transparent when they are committing a crime? How can somebody report a crime to a representative, an official of the state, without any subsequent risk of arrest? What happened is very illogical. It never should have happened and should never happen again.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, I fully agree with the member that this never should have happened. It is important to shed light on all the events that led up to this tragedy.

I will repeat my question for the member because he did not answer it. What training do Parole Board members receive? Does he know? He does not seem to know. Has their training changed since we have taken office? I will answer that: No, it has not.

I will add a second comment for my colleague, because he clearly knows very little about the subject. The regional vice-chairperson of the Quebec region, who is responsible for ensuring that all Board members have the requisite knowledge and skills, was appointed by the previous government. Board members' decisions are always reviewed by a regional vice-chairperson before they are issued; in this case, a Conservative official appointed by the previous government.

I would like to know what the member has to say about that. I would ask him to do a little research before rising in the House.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, instead of lecturing me, my colleague should be lecturing the two people who showed a lack of judgment and whose actions led to the situation we are discussing today.

In 2017, changes were made to the appointment process. People with no experience were appointed, and those people made a decision that led to the outcome we know today.

At no point in my speech did I criticize the Liberals. I did not criticize parliamentarians as a whole. I said that a situation had happened that never should have happened, and the member changed the subject to the Conservatives and training, telling me I should have done my homework.

I am not going to take lessons from someone who defends people who made an asinine, incompetent decision that should never have been made and that led to a tragic act. I have no lessons to learn from the member, and I am really disappointed with his stance and with the comments he made today.

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the House to speak to this very important opposition day motion that comes as a response to the tragedy that occurred in Quebec City a week and a half ago.

It is a disaster wherein a young woman was let down by the justice system and murdered by a violent criminal. Our motion calls for:

...the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to conduct hearings into this matter, including a review of the changes made by the government in 2017 to the board's nomination process.

It is the responsibility of the House to ensure measures are taken so that no tragedy like this ever happens again.

This terrible situation should not have been allowed to happen the first time. We have a man given a life sentence for horrifically murdering his 32-year-old female partner. The criminal was assessed as a high risk to reoffend, particularly with a partner, but as it goes, and as we have seen happen time and again, an offender serves a portion of a sentence and is then turned loose, regardless of the risk to reoffend.

In this case, the man was granted day parole as a violent criminal with a risk to reoffend, and then had his day parole extended last September by the Parole Board. They noted that a risk management strategy had been developed to allow this man to meet women for his sexual gratification. How did this not raise a red flag within the Parole Board? A violent criminal with a particular risk to reoffend against vulnerable women was encouraged by his parole officer to solicit sex from vulnerable women.

The result was a preventable and truly heartbreaking tragedy. The lack of regard for the safety of Canadians is astounding. The Parole Board put this criminal's supposed needs above concern for possible future victims, showing an extreme lack of foresight and prudence.

Two former Parole Board members have pointed to a change in the Parole Board of Canada's nomination procedures. This has resulted in a lack of experienced members. That may have been a factor in this murder.

Business of Supply

If that is the case, that inexperienced Parole Board members made this decision and got it so wrong that it resulted in the murder of a vulnerable young woman, then those members who made the decision and the people who appointed them must face consequences.

This woman's death could have been prevented. An inquiry into the Parole Board's decision must be made. I am sure that all of my colleagues in this place will join me in condemning this inherently unjust decision, and call for an external inquiry.

When the Minister of Public Safety was asked about this and what was being done to get to the bottom of this case, he told the House on Monday that a full investigation would be conducted jointly by the commissioner of corrections and the chair of the Parole Board of Canada to determine the circumstances surrounding the killer's release, and to ensure lessons are learned from it. The Parole Board will investigate the Parole Board, continuing the legacy of unaccountability.

Canadians need and deserve an external inquiry so that we can make sure prudent decisions are made in the future and that violent offenders are not encouraged to solicit sex from vulnerable women, victims of prostitution, victims of what appears to be a reckless decision by the authors of the so-called risk management strategy.

This case is a prime example of a failure on the justice file, of a revolving-door prison system, and of putting criminals ahead of victims. With the passage of Bill C-75, the previous Liberal government cemented its legacy as being soft on crime. It made sweeping changes that were very concerning and weakened our justice system.

• (1615)

That piece of legislation watered down penalties for over 100 serious crimes. Dangerous criminals should not be getting fines for serious offences such as gang crime, using date rape drugs and impaired driving causing bodily harm. Across our country, victims' groups and law enforcement have opposed the government's weakness on crime and its refusal to take violent crime seriously.

Canadians deserve better than a Prime Minister who prioritizes the rights of criminals over the rights of victims. Conservatives will always put the rights of victims and law-abiding Canadians ahead of the rights of criminals.

This case is a continuation of the Liberals' soft-on-crime approach failing victims. If we look back at the previous Parliament, there are glaring examples of where the government unjustly put criminals before victims.

In 2018, Liberals fought tooth and nail against doing the right thing and putting Tori Stafford's killer behind bars after the killer had been transferred to a healing lodge. It was only after a public outcry, and weeks of pressure from the family and the official opposition, that they relented and put the killer back where she belonged.

A further example is when the Liberal government defended its decision to use veterans' benefits to pay for mental health services for a man who never served a day in his life in the military, but was locked up for murdering a female police officer.

Although the killer claimed to have PTSD from committing this truly heinous crime, the Liberals continued to defend their use of those benefits for this individual. It was out of touch, it was unjust and it again put the supposed rights of a criminal before the victim.

This approach is in stark contrast to the legacy of the Conservatives on the justice file. Our record is based on the most foundational meaning of justice being rendered to the other where it is due. This was showcased in the Victims Bill of Rights, which set a path for victims of crime to be protected and to have their voices heard during judicial proceedings and the subsequent incarceration of an offender.

The Victims Bills of Rights has much to offer victims. They should have their security considered by the appropriate authorities in the criminal justice system, and they should have the right to convey their views about decisions made by appropriate authorities in the criminal justice system that affect their rights under this act, and to have them considered. The right to have their security considered is truly foundational.

In closing, Canada's Conservatives are calling on the Liberal government to condemn the board's extremely misguided, reckless and negligent decision, and to conduct hearings into this matter, including a review of the changes made by the Liberal government in 2017 to the board's nomination process. This motion should be supported by all members of the House to correct an injustice, to review the circumstances of the Parole Board's shocking decision and to hold those responsible to account.

Nothing we can do will bring these young women back. However, as lawmakers, we can make sure it does not happen again. That starts by putting the rights of victims before those of criminals, and by supporting this motion to conduct hearings into this matter. I am calling on all members of the House to support our motion.

• (1620)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is not the first time the opposition has raised justice-related issues. We have seen a very positive response from the government to look at ways to improve the system. As much as possible, we have to try to avoid, unless it is well established and substantiated, pointing to a government or member and making the accusation that, because of that government or that member, there has been a death. That does a disservice.

Business of Supply

Having said that, wanting to co-operate and look at ways to improve the system is one of the reasons this internal review will take place. It will be a public document. I understand that many members on the government side will vote for the resolution. Would the member agree that we should be looking at ways to depoliticize this, get to the core of the issue and make sure this does not happen in the future?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, the official opposition's role is to hold the government to account, and that is truly what we are doing in this case. It is not a matter of pointing fingers. It has been established that a clear lack of judgment was exercised.

This matter needs to be reviewed by a parliamentary committee that is made up of members from all parties in the House, and that is tremendously important. It is our role as opposition members, and we will not waver in our resolve to make sure that we stand up for the rights of victims.

If the government came to the table and asked for all-party support, we would not need to point to examples that make our case as to why this is necessary and why it demonstrates a pattern with the government.

I am pleased to hear that members on the government benches will be supporting this motion, and I hope all members will consider doing so.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to put on the record a quote from Sandra Wesley, the director of Stella, a Montreal-based sex workers organization. She said:

They identified that this man was a potential danger to women and wasn't ready to have proper relationships with women, but figured that he could then go see sex workers.

She then went on to say, "It really tells us what they think about us."

There is no question that this is extremely disturbing and it should be looked into. However, underlying this question is another issue, and that is the safety of sex trade workers. They are out there, at risk. What measures do we need to take to ensure that they are recognized as human beings, as individuals, and that their safety is equally important as that of everyone else?

I would invite the member to provide suggestions of what approaches the Conservatives would take other than to say, "We do not recognize the sex trade at all."

● (1625)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, all Canadians, and all women, deserve full protection under the law, irrespective of and especially in vulnerable circumstances. They rely on legislators to craft laws and to make well-informed and appropriate appointments so that we are protecting them.

In this case, we had a decision by members of the Parole Board that said these vulnerable women were less than women who were not sex workers, and therefore they could be exposed to this violent criminal. The board's decision was reprehensible. It was a tragic catalyst for the discussion that we are having here today.

To the member's question, all women, but especially vulnerable women, need to be protected under the law and all government ap-

pointees need to have their best interests and truly their safety in mind when they are making decisions.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Jean.

As my party's critic for the status of women, I would first like to point out that the Bloc Québécois offered its deepest condolences last week to Marylène Levesque's loved ones, who deserve answers from the Parole Board of Canada, but also, and especially, concrete action.

Ms. Levesque was murdered by a man the state knew to be violent and who had already committed violent crimes against women. Her death marks Quebec's fifth femicide since December, and we must ask ourselves whether violence against women is being taken seriously enough. It is unfortunate to see yet another woman fall victim to it. Last week's protests in Quebec prove that people are concerned about this type of crime. How is it that a Parole Board of Canada official allowed this man to be with Marylène Levesque?

In my speech, I will briefly talk about my party's position, my questions about the Parole Board and my hope that there will be less violence against women, especially when taking into account the violent nature of the crime we are talking about today.

First, with regard to the Bloc Québécois's position, we believe that we need to be very careful before we comment on any legal proceedings or decisions because, generally speaking, we never have all of the facts.

However, in the case of Marylène Levesque's murder, the facts speak for themselves and show a serious violation of the rules and even of the federal justice and public safety laws. We are appalled by the Parole Board's completely insane decision to grant the accused permission to commit a criminal act with the complicity of the system that should have protected the victim.

The Bloc Québécois will therefore fully support this motion so that we can get to the bottom of the events that led to this murder, which, unfortunately, could have been prevented. People need to have confidence in their justice system, but that confidence has been undermined. However, we need to be careful. We are aware that criticizing the decisions and policies of the justice system is tricky because we need to fully understand the processes and laws, and especially the unique circumstances of each case. We are supporting this motion with the goal of understanding why the laws and processes in place were not correctly applied since the facts indicate that this situation could have been prevented under the existing rules.

We wish to reiterate that the principle of rehabilitation is not in any way at issue. However, in this specific case, it is clear that the board members had all the information they needed to return the offender to prison before the murder occurred; indeed, he had allegedly already breached his parole conditions, particularly those concerning drug use. Furthermore, they had all the information they needed to also prevent him from having contact with Marylène Levesque in the circumstances that we know, namely, that she was a sex worker, which is also prohibited.

This leads me in this second part of my speech to speak about what might have been problematic in the case we wish to debate today. I am using the conditional here because first and foremost we need to conduct an investigation to determine what happened and avoid hasty accusations.

First, let us discuss how dangerous Gallese was. According to the Parole Board, Gallese's risk of reoffending was moderate. Apparently there was contradictory information about this. Why did AF-PAD state that he was at high risk of reoffending, when that was not his official status?

Since 1988, Gallese was sentenced four times for being unlawfully in a dwelling-house, mischief in relation to private property, drunk driving and assault of Joanne Lafrance, the mother of his children. For this last offence, he was sentenced to seven days in jail and three years' probation.

This individual was also given a life sentence in 2006 for murdering his wife with a hammer, with no possibility of parole for 15 years.

Why was he released before 2021 despite problems with violence and addiction?

• (1630)

I am also concerned about changes to the nomination process for members of the Parole Board of Canada. According to a survey conducted by the Parole Board in May 2019, 70% of parole officers said that they were not able to do their work properly or to properly protect the public. In November 2018, the Auditor General of Canada came to the same conclusion regarding offenders under community supervision.

We are therefore very pleased that two investigations are under way, but we are impatiently awaiting the results.

I would like to talk about the criminal investigation first. When Le Devoir asked the Parole Board of Canada if it was aware that an offender's sexual needs were being taken into consideration, the Parole Board referred the paper to Correctional Service Canada, whose spokesperson said the CSC was reviewing the circumstances of the decision.

The Parole Board of Canada is also conducting an internal investigation. We thank the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness for asking for that on January 27. The CSC and the board will conduct the investigation jointly. However, even Jean-Claude Boyer, a lawyer and former Parole Board member, thinks the investigation should be external and independent.

Business of Supply

As I mentioned earlier, we also learned that the Auditor General of Canada produced a report in 2018 that confirmed that Correctional Service Canada was lacking resources and was not equipped to help certain offenders with the transition, which then increased their risk of reoffending. I will share a quote from the Auditor General's report:

Our audit also found that Correctional Service Canada did not properly manage offenders under community supervision. For example, it did not give parole officers all the information they needed to help offenders with their health needs, and parole officers did not always meet with offenders as often as they should have.

In short, the Auditor General had already noted the lack of resources. The government will have to answer the questions we have all been asking today on what it did or did not do to fix this problem.

Dave Blackburn, a former board member and former Conservative candidate, has also expressed concerns about the new appointment process for board members established in 2017. He said:

That year, Justin Trudeau's government changed the member renewal process. Members who had already been appointed to the Parole Board had to go through the same appointment process as new candidates.

According to him, as a result of the changes, the majority of experienced board members were not reappointed. We know how important experience can be.

In a decision made in September 2019 concerning the 51-year old accused, the Parole Board of Canada wrote:

During the hearing, your parole officer underlined a strategy that was developed with the goal that would allow you to meet women in order to meet your sexual needs.

Why did the Parole Board, in that same document, maintain that it deemed this strategy for meeting women to be inappropriate, adding that it constituted a significant and worrying risk factor?

In this context, the Parole Board expects a review of the analysis grid that led to this approach. It is even noted that as part of this decision, in September 2019, the Parole Board extended Eustachio Gallese's day parole. However, at the same time, his parole application was denied.

It is my wish that women suffer less violence. Last week I heard a journalist talk about an interaction she had with one of Mr. Gallese's security guards. She said that she noticed he had problems with authority and with women. He was also prone to taking on the role of seducer.

I therefore share the reactions of Quebec, whose justice minister, Sonia Lebel, of the Coalition Avenir Québec, is demanding explanations from the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness on the reasons that led to Mr. Gallese's day parole, given his history of violence against women. Her fellow MPs Véronique Hivon and Manon Massé are also demanding answers.

Business of Supply

Parti Québécois member Véronique Hivon is asking for a serious analysis of the situation. Is it a lack of training, a lack of information, or a lack of analytical tools? Was it the system that failed? She is also distressed at the thought that such a thing could happen at a time when there is growing awareness of femicide and the consequences of domestic violence.

Québec Solidaire's Manon Massé believes that lengthy reflection is needed, and she is not ruling out the idea of a public inquiry once the answers to certain questions have been obtained.

• (1635)

According to Quebec's status of women minister, Isabelle Charest, Quebec wants to increase security around victims of domestic violence to prevent violent crimes like the ones in recent months. Funding for shelters—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but her time is up. I am sure the hon. member for Shefford will have an opportunity to finish her speech or add to it during questions and comments. I know that it is a rather difficult matter.

The hon. member for Avalon has the floor for questions and comments.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of bantering back and forth about who should have done what or what should have happened to prevent this, tying it to the fault of the government or someone else. I agree that a mistake was made somewhere and there should be an investigation into what exactly happened.

However, does the member opposite believe the government should be involved directly with the decisions of the Parole Board in all cases going forward, especially those involving serious crimes?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Madam Speaker, of course it is important to respect the separation of powers between the legislative and judicial branches. The point of my remarks was simply to show that an investigation would surely be able to answer certain questions.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is good that this will be looked into because it is important. It is also important for us to ask questions with respect to the sex trade and the risks to which many of the sex workers are subjected today.

As we know, the Conservative government brought in Bill C-36, and there were huge implications with respect to the safety of sex workers. Therefore, I would invite the member to comment on what the government should do to address the issue of safety for sex workers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Madam Speaker, I was going to conclude my remarks by saying that the debate should be broadened and not focus only on the Marylène Levesque case. This case

must become an example, a precedent, to ensure that it never happens again. That includes educational campaigns. That is what it comes down to. We need to be proactive. We need to study these workers and their situation. The study must examine all violence against women.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her remarks. She addressed a number of issues that were also raised by Conservative members. I think this is about more than just training for the members of the Parole Board who made this decision. It is also about the kind of judgment they have shown since 2017. Many Conservative members touched on this. I think this is mainly about poor judgment.

In the member's opinion, what could a parliamentary committee do to assure us that everyone involved in the case of the murder of this innocent woman will be forced to explain how this lapse in judgment could have happened?

• (1640)

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. He will understand that I will not rush to judgment at this step. In my speech, I carefully used the conditional tense and asked questions. I do not want to assume anything about anybody's training or lack of judgment. I hope that the investigation will provide answers to some of the questions I raised.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to build on the previous question offered by the Conservative member with respect to the role of the committee in adding value to this process. As members of Parliament, we are not the board of investigation. There are professionals who are looking at the professional aspects.

However, as members of Parliament, how can we use the committee structure to broaden the scope or maybe add some value to the investigation?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Madam Speaker, we hope that this board will have the opportunity to study the various problematic aspects of this case and provide answers. It is especially important that these answers are not shelved afterward and that the board's report truly leads to concrete action. Now is the time to address violence against women. We must act.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Veterans Affairs; the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City, Health; the hon. member for Oshawa, International Trade.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would have liked to hear more of what my colleague from Shefford had to say. Her speech was very good. Mine might be a little bit shorter than hers.

I would like to read out the motion again because I think it deserves our attention.

That the House: (a) condemn the decision of the Parole Board of Canada that led to a young woman's death by an inmate during day parole in January of this year; and (b) instruct the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to conduct hearings into this matter, including a review of the changes made by the government in 2017 to the board's nomination process, with the view to recommend measures to be taken to ensure another tragedy such as this never happens again.

I would humbly submit that, had the motion been a bit shorter, more members would have supported it. For example, I would have liked it to simply say, "That the House instruct the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to conduct hearings into this matter with a view to recommending measures to be taken to ensure such a tragedy never happens again."

I would like to warn the House about some of the tangential issues that have emerged during the debate, and even during question period, concerning the death of Marylène Levesque.

I believe that, while the Parole Board has room for improvement, it is not totally dysfunctional. We need to keep that in mind. Without reading the file and without knowing what was in the reports and what the parole officers' perspective was, people have suggested that Mr. Gallese should never have been let out. People are practically saying that Mr. Gallese should never have been allowed transition and rehabilitation periods and that maybe he could have been released at the end of his sentence with no help adjusting to society. People have basically said that the Parole Board is setting killers free and that we should all be afraid of what it is doing. However, if we look at the statistics, which are a few years old but still relevant, we can see that, from 2013 to 2014, 99% of day parole periods and 97% of full parole periods granted to federal offenders were completed without a repeat offence.

More than 99% of all parole periods, whether day parole or full parole, were completed without the offender committing a violent offence.

Generally speaking, the Parole Board of Canada works. As my colleague reiterated, we are more focused on rehabilitating inmates than punishing them.

There has been some discussion about board member selection. People have called the board members unqualified without knowing the qualifications of the board members in question, or indeed of any board members.

From what some MPs are saying, it seems they are making recommendations and jumping to conclusions before there has even been an investigation. It feels a lot like a "shoot first, ask questions later" approach.

It seems that the crux of the problem is the board member selection process. However, it may go beyond that. Incidentally, Joseph Lainé, one of the board members who made the decision, had more than 10 years of experience on Quebec's parole board. I just wanted to bring that to the attention of my colleagues.

I would like to point out that there several possible causes for the tragedy that occurred. We do not know what was in the reports that generally go with the parole records. Was the analysis of these reports flawed? Were the reports themselves flawed?

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We do not know where the problem lies, but people are jumping to conclusions without even having all the documentation required to make an informed decision.

We do not know what arguments were made by Mr. Gallese's parole officer. We know that Mr. Gallese had had inappropriate relationships with women in the past, which would have raised doubts in the board members' minds and might even have prompted the idea that the criteria should be reviewed in the context of this file. We do not know more than that, but people are still jumping to conclusions.

I want to reiterate that we should be careful not to get tunnel vision on a file and shoot the messenger after the fact, after a decision has had tragic consequences. Had Marylène Levesque not died, we might have felt very differently, and we might have thought at first that the members' decision was appropriate.

● (1645)

I am calling on the House to be cautious on this kind of file and to respect the administration of justice.

It is not unheard of for a parolee to be instructed not to come into contact with women. Any instances of sexual or non-sexual contact that do occur must be reported to the parole officer. In this case, it appears as though a meeting was arranged with a woman outside the massage parlour, and this was not reported to the parole officer. That is what I understand. Perhaps that was the problem.

The problem could be any number of things. Perhaps it was the combination of all of these failures that led to this tragedy. Again, this shows just how important it is to examine this case carefully before drawing any conclusions.

I also want to point out that standing committees are able to set their own mandates. We could simply ask the committee to study the situation, without tying its hands, as I mentioned earlier. The committee could call witnesses, including the parole officer, the board members and the people who draft the criteria and guidelines. The committee could then decide to go further and see if there is cause to review the board member appointment process. However, tying the committee's hands right off the bat comes across as more of a political vendetta than a real desire to find a solution.

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Nevertheless, I believe that we should support the motion, because it will ultimately lead to an investigation, an in-depth study of the situation and, we hope, recommendations that will ensure that such a tragedy never happens again. Again, we must keep partisanship out of this and not draw conclusions without seeing the whole file. We must have faith in the standing committees and the mandates they set for themselves.

• (1650)

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really appreciate that the tone of the conversation has changed with the last two presentations in terms of separating partisanship from really trying to understand what has happened with process breakdown and failure, and what we might do as parliamentarians to add to the professional investigation that will be going on at the same time.

Could the hon. member across the way make any recommendations to the committee? Granted, she also said that committees are masters of their own destiny, but is there anything we should ask the committee to consider regarding the investigation?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I will simply reiterate what I have already said.

We could have simply asked the committee to look into the situation and determine what led to Marylène Levesque's murder. We could then have trusted the committee to come up with possible solutions. After examining the evidence, the committee could have gone in other directions and made other recommendations. That would have been the right path. I would be doing the opposite of what I just advocated if I were to make recommendations to the committee myself. I have full confidence in the committee.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yes, committees are their own masters. They can steer whichever way they want to go. However, I wonder if at the end of the day there should be something that comes back, not just on what went wrong in this particular situation, but on what is going wrong with people involved in the sex work business. Should there be some protections given to people involved in that particular job or environment, not just to the person providing the service? Should we be trying to criminalize more the people seeking those services?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, once again, I would urge the House to exercise some caution when it is tempted to lump too many subjects together in one file, like an omnibus bill.

As for sex work, it is a broader issue, more than a simple question of criminalization or legalization. The committees that examine issues related to the status of women, for example, might also want to look into this matter, particularly around the issue of prevention, which is definitely not a question of criminalization versus legalization. It is a much broader issue.

I also have confidence in the House and its desire to improve the lives of vulnerable women. This topic could spontaneously arise in any number of committees.

Once again, I do not think it is necessary or useful to tie the hands of committee members on this one particular issue.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is going to be an important study and I hope when it gets to the committee stage that, aside from looking at the specific incident itself, there is an opportunity to look beyond that.

The question at the core of the issue is the safety of sex trade workers. Are the measures that we have in place at the moment effective, or are we putting women at further risk? If we are putting women at further risk, what laws need to change to effectively ensure that women in the sex trade have the same protections as everyone else?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I am quite confident that when the committee studies this matter, there is no way it could ignore what happened and the murder of Marylène Levesque.

In any event, I am confident that the safety of sex workers will be interwoven into the questions that are asked and the recommendations that are made, including the possibility that other committees tackle this issue.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to extend my condolences to the family and friends of Marylène Levesque, who was killed by an inmate on day parole.

I also want to commend my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for the speech he gave today. What is more, I want to thank him for moving this motion. Before I read out the motion, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the excellent member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Today, we are debating a motion. However, I do not think that Parliament should have to take such action just to get the government to listen to reason. Democracy and procedure require us to study today's opposition motion. It is moving things forward. In fact, the government seems to be receptive. We will see what happens when we vote on this tomorrow.

The motion reads, and I quote:

That the House: (a) condemn the decision of the Parole Board of Canada that led to a young woman's death by an inmate during day parole in January of this year; and (b) instruct the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to conduct hearings into this matter, including a review of the changes made by the government in 2017 to the board's nomination process, with the view to recommend measures to be taken to ensure another tragedy such as this never happens again.

Let me summarize the facts. Eustachio Gallese, a 51-year-old man, was found guilty of killing his wife in 2006 by beating her with a hammer and stabbing her repeatedly. He was granted day parole despite his history of violence against women. My goal today is to talk some sense into parliamentarians. This is 2020, and it is unacceptable for a Canadian woman to be victimized because of an administrative error or poor judgment on the part of the Parole Board members who made it possible for this man to commit the unthinkable.

When the Parole Board extended the offender's day parole last September, it mentioned a risk management strategy. I do not understand how anyone could have thought they were managing risk with a strategy that enabled this man to do what he did. Mr. Gallese was allowed to meet with women, but only to satisfy his sexual needs.

Our current laws governing sex work were introduced by the Conservative government in 2014 and prohibit the purchase of sexual services. How could the Parole Board of Canada allow one of its clients to do just that? I said "client", but what I really meant was "murderer". How could they give this man permission to commit a crime? It is illegal to purchase sexual services, yet a federal institution approved the practice. Those people knew perfectly well where that man was going. That raises some important questions.

The Liberal government's correctional system has been called a revolving door, and it has cost innocent people their lives. Canada's Conservatives strongly condemn the Parole Board of Canada's decision to release a convicted murderer with a history of domestic violence on day parole so he could meet women to satisfy his sexual needs.

Ask any Canadian. Everyone agrees. That is unacceptable. How could anyone mess up so badly? Today's motion, the product of some conscientious work on the part of my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles and the official opposition, urges the government to take action.

● (1655)

This was a senseless decision. It was plain wrong, and last month it led to the death of a young woman, something that could have been prevented. We must have the means to prevent this from happening again. There must be justice for Marylène Levesque, and we must ensure that such unspeakable crimes never happen again.

We must protect honest Canadian citizens and put them first, ahead of those in prison, the criminals and the repeat offenders. That is essential. We must protect our society from people who unfortunately are deviant or criminal or who suffer from mental health issues. There are many reasons to justify this action. We must put mechanisms in place to protect our society.

How could they release a murderer who killed his wife on day parole? His history with women was well known. How could they let him become a client of an erotic massage parlour so he could satisfy his sexual urges? He killed his wife, was aggressive with several other women, and yet the Parole Board agreed to let him satisfy his sexual urges in a hotel with the board member's consent. I do not understand what happened. I do not know why the murder-

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er did this. Above all, I do not understand why the board member let this man cause irreparable harm.

We have to wonder where we are headed with this government. What does the future hold for our society? We have to protect our citizens. We have to protect the victims. We should not bring in measures to support and pamper our criminals even more. They have to suffer the consequences of their actions. Our society has to protect Canadians, both women and men.

As my colleague from Shefford said, Dave Blackburn, a leading expert, was indeed a candidate for the Conservative Party of Canada. We had an excellent roster of candidates who made us optimistic about our chances for forming the government. Unfortunately, democracy decided otherwise.

In an article in the *Quotidien* on January 29, Dave Blackburn said that the Parole Board of Canada's decision to release this offender on parole, essentially giving him free rein to commit his irreparable act, was unjustifiable.

This government is incapable of governing and making effective decisions in the interest of Canadians. I will give some examples that illustrate the current government's incoherence when it comes to protecting honest citizens. I will list them without elaborating: the Tori Stafford case; Bill C-75, the firearms bill, which vexes honest citizens, hunting enthusiasts and sport shooters; and the legalization of cannabis.

In closing, I would like to remind hon. members that the 2019-20 departmental plan mentions a continuing increase at the national level in the number of offenders managed in the community. Their average annual number rose to 9,000 in 2017-18 from 7,700 five years earlier, a veritable explosion. I think that the measures the government across the way has implemented since coming to power in 2015 are not working. It is not dealing with things in a clear manner and it is not protecting the public.

I was going to talk about a file we should be working on to provide help to people in need, to make our society even more prosperous.

● (1700)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I tried to move an amendment earlier and I encourage members to seriously give it consideration.

The member opposite made an assertion in regard to the Parole Board. It is important to emphasize that the Parole Board of Canada explicitly opposed permitting the offender to visit massage parlours, yet we have had a number of Conservative members give a different impression.

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I wonder if my colleague across the way could provide clarity as to what degree he believes that the Parole Board was not doing what we have been told and that it clearly opposed permitting the offender to visit a massage parlour. Does he know something that we do not know that would validate his assertion?

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North.

The fact is that a man on day parole received authorization from the Parole Board of Canada to obtain sexual services.

I will turn the question back to my colleague. If he has information that we do not have, then he should give it to parliamentarians. Until further notice, we can say that this man's actions were supported by the Parole Board. What is unfortunate about the response of my colleague opposite is that he is looking for excuses. Personally, I want to protect Canadians from violence. That is why I am placing my confidence in the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security and not necessarily in the government opposite.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to add my voice to those of my colleagues in expressing support for Marylène Levesque's family and for the way in which we must pursue justice for this woman.

I also want to express the extent to which I am deeply concerned about the fact that many of the interventions in the House today have chosen to ignore the fact that the reality of this case is very much rooted in the denigration of women, particularly of women who are sex workers.

It is clear to me that if we do not pursue this investigation in such a way that looks at the need for sex workers to live in safety and in dignity, then we do not actually want to get to the bottom of what happened and see justice for Marylène Levesque and so many other women who find themselves in a vulnerable situation day in and day out.

I am disturbed that the actions of the Parole Board were rooted in misogyny. The fact that we have an opportunity to get to the bottom of this is something we must take very seriously and that means a very clear recognition that this is our chance to get it right when it comes to protecting the rights of sex workers in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

I think it is important and worthwhile for all parliamentarians to take action to find solutions and protect women and men. Just because the victim was a sex worker does not mean that she does not have the same rights as any other Canadian. She is the victim of a decision of the Parole Board. She is the victim of a man who did something terribly wrong. She paid for it with her life. Let us not muddy the debate. I think it is important to find solutions to enable society to be responsible and protect Canadians.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, today we are having a very important debate and I am so glad to be part of it.

The motion calls on the House to condemn the decision of the Parole Board of Canada that resulted in the tragic death of Marylène Levesque in Quebec City. Today's motion is extremely relevant, especially when we recognize the importance of eradicating and ending violence against women. Ensuring correct and accurate decisions by the Parole Board, making sure that it is doing its job appropriately, is what we need to do here today.

I have heard some of the interventions today. We have to look at what actually happened to this woman, what actually resulted in her death and why this happened. It is not so much about the other issues. We can talk a lot about the debates that we have been sparked in the last week. We can talk about legalization of prostitution, when to look at mandatory sentences and we can also look at the fact that the federal government has over 200 vacancies on its appointments. There are so many other issues we can intervene on, but I think we have to go ultimately to what the issue is, which is that a convicted felon was released on day parole.

Looking at the history of this file is very important, because we have to put it into context. What actually happened here and why is it so important to discuss this motion?

To begin, we have to look at the 2006 brutal death of Chantale Deschênes at the hands of Eustachio Gallese. He was convicted of murdering his wife with a hammer and stabbing her several times. We need to look at that and why this man was convicted in the first place.

Mr. Gallese was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole for 15 years. Then, looking at the timeline we come to September 2019, when the Parole Board reviewed his file. His file indicated that he had a history of violence against women, even before his murder conviction in 2006. According to Parole Board documents, he was not ready to have relationships with women. This is such an important point. His file noted in September 2019 that he was not ready to have relationships with women, yet that is exactly what happened.

This is very much a disconnect. We are talking about violence against women. We are talking about a man's right to day parole, but 15 years after the fact. Like any other Canadian who may not be a lawyer but wants to understand the legal background of this, I want to put out some clarification. When we look at what we are trying to justify, we really need to look at the Parole Board of Canada, what day parole is and how it came to this decision.

I would like to read into Hansard text regarding day parole in Canada:

Day parole allows an offender to participate in community-based activities in preparation for full parole or statutory release. Offenders on day parole must return nightly to a community-based residential facility or halfway house unless otherwise authorized by the Parole Board of Canada. In addition to standard conditions of day parole, the Parole Board may also impose special conditions that an offender must abide by during release.

The decision-making process includes two key principles here. I think this is what we are debating today. There are two key principles that seem to have been thrown to the wind when the decision was made to allow this person to have day parole.

First is that the protection of society be the paramount consideration in the determination of any case. Second is that the board make the least restrictive determination consistent with the protection of society. It must consider many different things as well. It has to consider whether there is a risk to letting the person out. Is there a risk to society? Will the offender, on release, contribute to society? There are lots of different things that we hear or see, but these risk assessments that must be made by the Parole Board are very important. I would like to talk about these two points.

An offender's social and criminal history must be looked at. Let us look at the decision by the Parole Board of Canada. In September 2019, the Parole Board noted that he should not have any relationships with women. In 2006, he murdered his wife with a hammer and by stabbing her. Prior to that, we know that violence against women existed in what he does. We have to look at progression. Was there any progression at all with this man? Is he going to be released to the community and is the community going to be safe?

Looking back at this file and checking things off, we see question marks all over the place. We know that Mr. Gallese was sentenced for life without parole for 15 years, from 2006 to 2015. He had murdered his wife and had a history of violence. According to the decision made, for the protection of society, the offender will not present any undue risk to society.

- (1710)

These are check boxes that were absolutely not checked. For somebody to make the decision to let him out on day parole after all of the information that was given is extremely risky to the safety of our society.

Although the file seems cut and dried to most Canadians, somehow it got lost in translation when we were dealing with the Parole Board of Canada. To me, this question is absolutely crazy. Why did this happen? What happened next, when we were looking at this? How did this happen in the first place?

We can play the blame game here, but I think the most important thing is that we do not ever want to see this happen again. As we are having this important debate, who in this chamber wants to see such a horrific crime ever happen again to any victim?

In Quebec, we know that, after some changes made in 2017, only two of the 16 parole officers had any experience, which means that they were reappointed. I would like to share with members an article from the CBC, which said:

Two former Parole Board of Canada members said Tuesday they tried to warn the...government in 2017 that changes to the way board members were nominated could lead to inexperienced members making "dangerous" decisions.

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Here we are today, and those dangerous decisions were made. Unfortunately, Ms. Levesque is no longer with us.

The article continues:

They fear that very inexperience may have contributed to the death of...Levesque, 22 [years old], in a...room in...Quebec City....

Dave Blackburn, a Parole Board member who had served from 2015 to 2018, stated in the article that:

I never would have put a man who has a violent past, who killed his...spouse, among young women who are vulnerable.

This is so important. I am listening to people talk about vulnerable women. We are talking about an escort. We are talking about a young woman who was working in a massage parlour. We are talking about our most vulnerable women. We are not protecting them when we allow people to say, "Go out there and have sex with them. Do not worry about your criminal background and let us not worry about the risk. This is okay."

Mr. Blackburn continues to say that, "It's like putting the wolf in the hen house", which is exactly what the Parole Board of Canada did by releasing that man.

The article continues:

Jean-Claude Boyer, a parole board member from 2012 to 2018, agreed, questioning how Gallese's Correctional Services' case worker or his parole officer [would have] ever...characterized the offender's encounters with sex workers as a "risk management strategy."

This is what really scares me. We have people making this strategy and assessing it, but the fact is that, looking at the risk management and recognizing his past history, this person should never have been released in the first place.

Second, he should never have been released and advised to pay for sex to deal with his sexual urges. This is absolutely ludicrous. As a mother of daughters and a member of Parliament who represents so many women and children, I am very concerned with what our society is going to look like if we are going to treat these situations so lightly.

The article goes on to say that:

Former parole board member Jean-Claude Boyer was one of a group of ex-members who warned the clerk of the Privy Council and the prime minister...that losing experienced members could lead to "dangerous" decisions.

Again, that is exactly what we saw.

Today, as members know, is another monumental day, because the bill that was brought forward previously by Rona Ambrose was reintroduced by the Minister of Justice. This is extremely important. We need to see this important type of legislation go through the House of Commons and perhaps look at some amendments, because we know that judges are dealing with these cases, but what about Parole Board officers?

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Have they gone through the proper training on sexual assault to make sure that when they are releasing these people on bail or day parole they are not going to reoffend? Are they aware of what happened to previous victims? If we are going to protect our most vulnerable, why are we not doing this? We talk about this all the time, and we are not doing it.

To conclude, a Canadian Police Association brief to the House of Commons in 2007 noted that:

Many dangerous offenders admit to having committed a large number of sexual offences for which they were not arrested—an average of 27 offences per offender.

This is hugely concerning. Therefore, I am looking forward to continuing this conversation. We can do more, and we must do better.

• (1715)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I indicated when I stood up to address the issue, the system designed to protect the public failed in this incident. I think all members of the House of all political stripes recognize that. What has taken place is very tragic and we give our condolences to Ms. Levesque's family and friends. It is important that we not forget this and continue to push to ensure that it does not happen in the future.

In the debate I have heard thus far, it has been upsetting that members of the opposition, particularly Conservative members, have tried to give a false impression that this is the government's fault, and they go on about the appointment process. I point out to the member that in order for parole officers to do what they do, the vice-chair, who was a Harper appointment, must train them. They cannot manage the files until they have been qualified and receive certain training. That is also something—

• (1720)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have been trying to get the member's attention to let him know that I do have to allow for other questions.

The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, I am not sure if there was a question there, because I just heard a lot of talking. I hear what the member is saying, but let us—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I am talking about a really serious situation and I love the heckling coming from the other side.

The bottom line is that out of the 16 appointees, only two of them know what they are doing. Let us be honest. Have they had the sexual assault training they needed? Obviously somebody thought it was okay to send a violent criminal out there to have sex. I put that on the shoulders of the people who made that decision.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I simply want to ask my colleague two questions.

In this process, is she willing not to jump to conclusions too quickly?

Is she willing to let the committee do its job so that it can give us its recommendations?

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, it is very important we have this studied at committee. It is exactly what we are asking for through the motion. We need a group of members, representing all parts of our country, on the committee that will study this. It would give us an opportunity to look at all sides, not just internally, which we have seen in the past. In the 42nd Parliament, we saw the amount of times that things were taken out or blacked out. I would prefer that anything we do is transparent, not just to save the government's reputation.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, in this discussion, we have also been talking about the importance of looking at the overall safety of sex workers. As part of the study, I hope we would get into that question.

Does the member support ensuring that the study of the motion include examining the practices in place with respect to sex trade workers, the current law in Canada, and the risks workers are exposed to and what changes might be necessary going forward?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, this has two parts.

First, we have to look at the Parole Board. That is exactly what the motion is asking for.

Second, the conversation regarding sex work has been taking over. I have read many articles. Support depends on where one sits on this, but I cannot support prostitution. I realize that many members would like to, and I recognize that this is true in the NDP and in the Liberals' youth caucus. That is lovely, but it is just not the way I was raised. Part of the problem is that I know that approximately 95% of women who are part of the sex trade are not there by choice.

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Markham—Stouffville.

In response to questions from the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, I would like to start by again extending our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Maryl ne Levesque. This young woman's death was tragic and I hope that we can learn from the board of investigation that is currently under way how this kind of tragedy can be avoided in the future. We need to have solid facts in front of us and I have full confidence that the board of investigation will shed light on the circumstances that led to this tragic incident.

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The Parole Board of Canada is guided by the Corrections and Conditional Release Act in all its decisions. Under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the board is responsible for making decisions to grant, deny, terminate or revoke day and full parole for federal offenders serving sentences of two years or more.

Under the CCRA, all offenders in federal custody, including those serving indeterminate sentences or life sentences, become eligible for parole at a time set by a judge during sentencing. This is not to say that all offenders are granted conditional release, but that all offenders must under the law be considered for conditional release at some point in their sentence.

Before granting any form of conditional release, Parole Board members must be satisfied that the offender will not pose an undue risk to the community and that the release of the offender will contribute to the protection of society. Conditional release contributes to the protection of society by facilitating the reintegration of the offender into society as a law-abiding citizen. Gradual and supervised release provides the best protection for our communities and day parole is one of the steps in the continuum of releases.

I would like to underline that offenders serving life or indeterminate sentences released on parole remain under supervision by Correctional Service of Canada for the rest of their lives. This is an important point as even if an offender is in the community, that offender continues to serve his or her sentence and is subject both to standard conditions as well as any special conditions that the Parole Board of Canada deems necessary for CSC to manage the offender's risk to the community.

Offenders on day parole must return nightly to a community-based residential facility or halfway house unless otherwise authorized by the Parole Board of Canada.

An offender can be returned to prison at any time if he or she violates parole conditions, commits a new offence or is deemed to pose an increased risk to the community. Offenders on day parole are not free. They are supervised by Correctional Service of Canada and subject to a number of special conditions.

Board members render decisions that are crucial to public safety. That is why this government worked to ensure that the process of appointing board members was merit-based and free from political interference.

Upon appointment, Parole Board of Canada members complete an intensive, five-week board member orientation program. During that time, they receive training on relevant law, policy and risk assessment by the Parole Board of Canada in partnership with key academics and practitioners in the field of criminal justice. This is followed by ongoing mentoring and coaching by the regional vice-chair, experienced board members and the regional trainer. No board member is assigned any decision-making responsibility until that member has fully completed training and has the full confidence of the regional vice-chair.

Board members also participate in continuous learning and development opportunities throughout their mandate.

The primary emphasis on board member training is to ensure that members understand the board's legal authorities. Public safety is the number one priority for the board in its decision-making.

• (1725)

It is important to note that in the vast majority of cases, day parole is completed successfully without violent reoffending. In fact, in 2018-19, 99.9% of offenders on day parole were not convicted of a violent offence during their supervision period. This demonstrates that, in almost all cases, day parole helps to gradually reintegrate offenders back into Canadian society and contributes to public safety.

I would like to assure the members that the government shares the concerns of Canadians around this case. That is why the Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board of Canada are convening a joint board of investigation into the circumstances that led to this incident, to ensure that all established protocols were followed and that lessons are learned. Let me reiterate that Parole Board of Canada members are selected by a rigorous, open, transparent and merit-based process. Once selected, they are given exhaustive training on relevant law, policy and risk assessment. They are committed to continuous learning and development and they take very seriously their duty to protect the safety of Canadians. This commitment is demonstrated through the PBC's parole outcomes.

As the board of investigation moves forward, I hope that we can determine what exactly happened in this instance so that we can learn from this tragedy and take steps to ensure that this kind of situation is not repeated. I would like to assure the members that the investigation will be conducted swiftly and effectively, as none of us want to see this type of tragedy repeated in the future. Marylène Levesque and her family and friends deserve no less than our utmost efforts in this regard.

• (1730)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has come to light through the debate today is that there was a system change, and that 14 of the 16 parole officers were inexperienced. In these difficult situations, does my colleague not believe that experience does help parole officers make decisions? I understand they used to pair together inexperienced officers with experienced officers, so they could learn from each other and make decisions. What is the role of experience in terms of the ability of these officers to make decisions?

Mr. Ron McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, in the circumstances, we do not know all of the facts yet. It is very important that we ascertain all of the facts very carefully before we make any judgments or draw any conclusions. That is the whole purpose of the board of investigation that is going to take place.

*Business of Supply**[Translation]*

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his comments.

It is possible that the investigation, which we hope will be conducted by an independent body, will reveal that no blame is to be assigned to the authorities and the system. If that is the case, does my colleague from Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam agree that the situation still requires that we take the time to review the practices of the Parole Board of Canada, the training and supervision of parole officers and how we protect vulnerable people like Marylène Levesque, who did not know how dangerous Eustachio Gallese was?

[English]

Mr. Ron McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is helpful to speculate on the outcome of the investigation. We will learn what the investigation has to tell us. Just as a general practice, going forward, it is always good to keep an eye on our processes and practices to make sure they deliver the outcomes that we want from them. I have no doubt that, as we have been promised by the minister, the outcomes of this investigation will be transparent and shared with the public. I have full confidence in the board to conduct such an investigation.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot today about the selection process of the commissioner as it relates to their work on the Parole Board. Would the member provide his comments as to what he thinks is the best way to select members for the board? Would it be based on political affiliation, as we saw in the previous Harper government?

We know at that time six of the nine members of the Quebec board were active supporters of the Conservative Party. Would the member think a better approach would be one based on the skills and abilities of individual members, regardless of their political affiliation?

• (1735)

Mr. Ron McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree that the criteria for choosing members of such a panel should be strictly merit-based. It should be irrespective of any political affiliation. It should not exclude people for being members on the basis of any particular affiliation, but should be entirely merit-based.

Ms. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure to rise in the House for the first time in debate. As it is the first time for me, I want to thank my constituents in Markham—Stouffville for having confidence in me to represent their interests. I want to let my constituents know that I will be working as hard as I can to represent their best interests in my time here.

In relation to this motion, I will start by extending my deepest condolences to the family and friends of Marylène Levesque. It is a terrible tragedy. Our thoughts are with them. It has been said many times in the House today and I simply want to add my deepest condolences.

This is a case that has, understandably, brought a very emotional response from the public, as well as important questions about the corrections and conditional release systems in Canada. I will spend

most of my time for my remarks on the selection process as it relates to Governor in Council appointments. I want to clarify how that appointment process is today.

In February 2016, our government announced a new approach to appointments, which applies to the majority of full-time and part-time positions on commissions, boards, Crown corporations, agencies and tribunals across the country. This new approach was introduced to ensure the process of appointments would be open to all Canadians, providing them with an opportunity, should they be interested and have the required qualifications, to participate in government organizations and make a contribution to Canada's democratic institutions by serving as Governor in Council appointees.

The selection process is based on merit. It is designed to identify highly qualified candidates who meet the needs of the organization and are able to perform the duties of the position to which they would be appointed. It seeks individuals who have the qualifications, education, experience, knowledge, skills, abilities and personal suitability to fill the position. We also ensure that they meet any statutory or other conditions.

Finally, we look for diversity. Our recruitment strategy seeks to attract qualified candidates who will help achieve gender parity and reflect Canada's diversity in terms of linguistic, regional and employment equity groups. By that, of course, I mean indigenous peoples, women, persons with disabilities and members of visible minority communities, as well as members of ethnic and cultural groups.

Based on individual self-identification, representation of employment equity groups has increased for all appointees since the new, open, transparent and merit-based approach to GIC appointments was announced in February 2016. This process includes officers and agents of Parliament and the Parole Board, among many others.

A notice of appointment opportunity is developed, outlining the selection criteria for and requirements of the position. As noted in the notice, members appointed to the board must be sufficiently diverse in their backgrounds to be able to collectively represent community values and views in the work of board and to inform the community with respect to unescorted, temporary absence, parole and statutory release.

The notice of opportunity is posted on the GIC appointments website and the website of the organization that is filling the position. A link to the notice is also published in the Canada Gazette while the application period is open.

At the same time, a recruitment strategy is developed for selection processes where there is a need to conduct outreach regardless of the position type. This may also include targeted outreach to communities of interest, such as professional associations.

All interested Canadians can submit their applications for the positions posted on the government's appointment website.

This government is very mindful that we want the best and most qualified people possible for these important roles. To this end, the selection committee undertakes a rigorous assessment process. A number of factors determine the composition of a selection committee, including the type of position, the mandate and type of organization. Generally, a selection committee is comprised of key decision-makers, including the responsible minister's office and the responsible organization. In the case of the Parole Board, this is the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

• (1740)

Turning back to the selection process for all GIC positions, the process includes screening candidates' applications against the education and experience criteria in the notice of appointment opportunity.

For administrative tribunals such as the Parole Board, written exams are administered. The exam tests key criteria such as analytical and decision-making skills. It also measures the ability of applicants to interpret the provisions of various statutes, regulations, policies and other documents in a quasi-judicial context and assess the relevance of precedents in order to render decisions.

It is also recommended that applicants visit the Parole Board website for additional information on a day in the life of a board member, the role and responsibilities of a board member and contributing to public safety.

A short list of qualified candidates is then established and the candidates are interviewed by the selection committee. Third party reference checks are also undertaken. This process eventually results in the identification of qualified candidates.

Following the assessment of candidates, the selection committee submits to the responsible minister an advice letter identifying the candidates found to be the most highly qualified for appointment. Upon consideration of this advice, the minister then makes a recommendation to the GIC for appointment.

GIC nominees must undergo background and security checks to determine their suitability for public office. Nominees must also sign a document certifying that they acknowledge and will observe the ethical and political activity guidelines for public office holders as a condition of their holding office in the Government of Canada.

Over 30,000 applications have been received since we began our open, transparent and merit-based selection process, and some 1,380 people have been appointed. Currently, over 50% of GIC appointees are women, over 8% are visible minorities, over 6% are indigenous peoples and over 3% are persons with disabilities.

To bring this back to the Parole Board, based on individual self-identification, nearly 60% of incumbents to GIC positions on the board are women, more than 7% are persons with disabilities, over 11% are visible minorities and over 14% are indigenous peoples. In comparison, in 2015 only 30% of board members were women, 4% were indigenous people and 1% were visible minorities.

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While we maintain our confidence in the open, transparent and merit-based appointment process, any change can always benefit from a review of its effectiveness. Part of this motion actually speaks to that.

The process we have in place allows us to find the most qualified people for the positions our government needs to fill. When we appoint people to GIC positions they are working in the best interest of their country as well as fellow citizens and residents.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are all here because a horrible, outrageous thing happened, and we would like to see if there is anything we can do to make sure it does not happen again.

I am wondering if the member could clarify her position and the position of the Liberal Party on the motion. She may recall back in 2017 when experienced, qualified parole experts wrote a letter to the Prime Minister and to Michael Wernick expressing their serious concerns about the changes that were made, which she outlined. There was even an opinion piece in *Le Devoir* about it.

The minister has been clear that he wants an internal review. In other words, the Parole Board will be reviewing itself, and we think that needs to be more open and transparent.

Would the member clarify if she and the government will commit to that review being done by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security and that it will not be an internal review?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, there is a board of investigation that is conducting a very thorough review of this case. It has been announced by the minister. I think that is entirely appropriate.

In addition, the motion does speak to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security conducting hearings into the matter. I am sure the standing committee will decide for itself what exactly it wants to study going forward, and I have every confidence that this matter will be fully investigated.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the House seems to be in agreement on a few points today, notably the importance of asking questions and getting answers. I myself have a question.

Throughout this debate, certain issues keep coming up, as some members have pointed out. One such issue is the ability to access the services of a sex worker, which I find concerning. A man can be told that he cannot be in contact with women, but he can be in contact with sex workers, as though their job means that they are no longer women, that they do not count.

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I know, or at least I hope, that this is not what people wanted. Nevertheless, this impression can sometimes stem from a lack of knowledge about sex work.

Could the member answer my question? Maybe she knows, maybe she does not know, but I am asking the question openly.

In the continuous training that employees receive, how much emphasis is there on the social, economic and psychological realities of female and male sex workers, since male sex workers are also at risk?

[English]

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, it will presumably be addressed by the board of investigation looking into this area with respect to the training requirements in relation to those caseworkers who look at the conditions of parole, day parole and so on.

From my point of view, the safety of women is absolutely paramount, whether they be sex workers or not. Victims of domestic violence is an issue that troubles many of us. I have been very involved in some of the shelters in my riding. We certainly take the safety of women extremely seriously. I have every confidence that this will be part of the investigation.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we engage in this discussion and with the study that will take place at committee, would the Liberal members support looking into the issues around safety for sex workers, including what the laws are today and what needs to be changed in order to ensure their safety?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, I am not a member of that standing committee, so I cannot commit my colleagues to what they will decide. I am hopeful there will be good debates at the committee and a successful path forward will be established by all members.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to note that I will be sharing my time with the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Today, we are discussing what I consider to be a very reasonable motion in response to a horrific but preventable murder. Before I start into that area, I think it would be good to put some context around the discussion we are having today.

It is extremely important for the public to have confidence in our criminal justice system, in public safety and in the decisions of the Parole Board. We have a government that has been here for over four years. Over the last number of years, I would suggest there have been some flags that it has not been paying attention to but should have. I know it loves to suggest the previous government did this and that, but there is a stale date on that and that stale date has come. It has had over four years to put its stamp on things and to be responsible for its decisions and what is happening in government.

The current government received an Auditor General's report in 2018. In that 2018 report, there were concerns, including gaps in the monitoring of inmates and standards not being followed. It identified some problems. The government indicated that it accepted the concerns of the Auditor General and was going to make changes. If we look at the public accounts and the departmental

plans, the changes the government made were reductions in the budgets for those departments. If we look at the government's plans for those departments where the Auditor General was identifying concerns, we see reductions were made. Therefore, we have to balance those two factors.

In December 2019, the Union of Safety and Justice Employees said things were at a crisis point and it made a whole host of recommendations as to what it believed the government needed to do to respond to a critical situation. As I understand, to date it has not received the courtesy of a response to some of its very clearly laid out situations.

Mr. Boyer, who was on the Parole Board from 2012 to 2018, talked about how the changes made by the Liberal government in 2017 led to a shortage of experienced members. In Quebec we now know that 14 out of 16 board members were inexperienced. They had been on the job less than a year or two and were not experienced.

As a nurse, I come from a health care background. When we had new nurses who came to work for us, they needed mentoring because there is something one gains from years of experience. When one is dealing with difficult situations involving the health of people, those years of experience make a difference. It is fair that the government wants new systems and new people. However, it should have done that methodically, recognized the importance of that experience and taken its time, instead of just blowing the system apart. It can do that with some types of appointments but not with something this critical, which requires a seasoned and experienced eye. It cannot just blow the system apart, put a bunch of new people in place, and expect everything will be okay and that the decisions will have the benefit of the eyes of those experienced people.

Therefore, I would suggest that is something the government needs to look at very seriously. Yes, as a government, it has every right to make those GIC appointments and to have a system, but when it takes a system, blows it apart and puts inexperienced people in place, it has a responsibility and it needs to reflect on that issue.

• (1750)

Typically, throughout our history, there have been times when the public has looked at decisions made by the Parole Board and has really been quite concerned. I think that the National Post in 2018 published a list of freed serial killers, child murderers, cop killers, cannibals and terrorists who were all freed despite the pleas of the families. I think we as a Parliament have failed these families when justice is not seen to be done and people who have committed horrific crimes are out of prison. The families know that these people are at a high risk to reoffend.

This is an example from a long time ago, but in 1984 Denis Lortie wounded 13 in the Quebec National Assembly and killed three. He was on full parole only 12 years later. How does that happen? I think any reasonable Canadian would question that he was on parole only 12 years after he shot and killed three people and injured so many more.

There are decisions to be made over time and we need to do everything we can. When there are people appointed, as they were, who are not experienced, more problems will be created.

It is against this background of dysfunction that I have talked about, such as the Auditor General's report, the union flagging concerns and a number of other things, that we have a series of decisions that directly contributed to the tragic death of a 22-year-old innocent young lady, Marylène Levesque.

I think everyone in this House has agreed that it is appalling. He was a convicted murderer with a history of violence against women. I believe in the 1990s there was an assault. He murdered his wife in 2004. He hit her with a hammer and stabbed her. He was sentenced in 2006.

What brought this clearly to my mind was an article in the Vancouver Sun that clearly articulated some assumptions made, either by individuals without experience, or by a system that allowed these decisions to be made. We need to find out the answer. The article outlined the questions we have to ask about this situation and they are as follows:

The first is that men — even violent criminals — have a right to satiate their sexual appetites with another person.

That clearly is what was said, but was it one person or is it systemic?

The second is the perverse idea that if a violent man is incapable or not ready to form a healthy relationship with another person, it's OK for him to engage in unhealthy relationships where, as the buyer, he has power over the seller.

Finally, putting the sexual needs of a violent criminal ahead of the safety of other Canadians, including those who do sex work, suggests a grotesque hierarchy that is an affront to the constitutional and moral ideals of equality.

Those three points clearly go to the very root of the issue of what happened in this case and why everyone finds it so offensive. It is important that everyone in this House agree that a parliamentary committee has some important work to do, to look at the system and actually do the job.

• (1755)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last couple of hours, members mostly from the Conservative benches have been talking about experience and that experience does matter. They raised a lot of concerns.

I wonder if the member could reflect on the types of individuals who are receiving these appointments. More often than not they are individuals such as correctional officers and law enforcement officers, and they bring a great deal of real-life experience. Prior to them actually hearing a case, it is the vice-chair who has the programming, which has not changed in terms of training. Before the

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individuals can deal with these matters they have to be approved to do so.

Is my colleague trying to imply that this individual is not doing his job?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I go back to my analogy about health care. Every nurse has nursing training, but it is the experience in a very specialized area of a job where they are making decisions that the experience matters.

If it is not a factor, then the committee is going to find that answer. However, the Liberals seem very reluctant to actually even dig into this as an issue. They are defending their new system and they are not willing to put it through a parliamentary process to examine whether the system is defensible and whether it contributed to what happened. That is what we are asking for here: to look at it, understand it and try to make things better.

• (1800)

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her intervention on this horrific event that is up for debate here today in the motion.

I am wondering about one thing. There is a lot of finger-pointing going on as to who is responsible for this person making this decision or that person making another decision. If a nurse is being integrated into a new role in a hospital, maybe an ICU unit or something, there is certain training provided beforehand and ongoing at all times.

I believe we as government members have said loudly and clearly that we support the intent of this motion. The member keeps saying that the government has to do this and do that. Is the member suggesting that the government itself be involved with the Parole Board decision when people who commit these horrific crimes are up for parole, when the government put them in that position to start with? Should the government have a say in what the Parole Board does or does not do?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, in my speech I talked about the context. The government does have a responsibility to listen to the red flags, to listen to red flags from the Auditor General, to listen to red flags from the unions and to listen to red flags from people who have been in that role and who have experience and who express concerns about the new system.

The government is responsible for the system. It is obviously not responsible for the individual decisions that get made. However, the government has created a system that had a lot of flags that it did not respond to, and that is the government's responsibility.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think we are all in agreement in this House, or at least I hope we are all in agreement, that the situation that has occurred is unacceptable. The fact that a woman's life has been lost is unacceptable.

People in the sex trade should be valued, just like anyone else in our community. In this instance, clearly there have been issues related to that idea. I hope the committee will get to the bottom of this.

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Beyond that, there is an underlying question that I have asked over and over again. The question is whether the current policies and laws that are in place in Canada put sex trade workers at risk. If they do, what do we need to do as parliamentarians to change those laws and put measures in place to ensure that we bring in laws to ensure sex trade workers are not put at even further risk than they are today?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, we do have a very big and complex system in Canada. Today we are focused on what was clearly an issue in the parole system in either the culture or the decision-making.

I know New Democrats also have supply days. It sounds like this is a very important issue, and I would love to have further conversation about how we keep women in this country safe, regardless of who they are or what they do.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the residents of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who, sadly, understand all too well what it is like to lose a friend, a family member, a loved one at the murderous hands of a convicted criminal.

My sympathy goes out to the family and friends of Marylène Levesque. She was murdered by the same man who murdered Chantale Deschenes. This man beat Chantale with a hammer, then stabbed her to death. Despite being convicted of a gruesome, misogynistic murder, this individual was given parole after only 15 years.

That we allow violent murderers on parole after such a short time troubles many Canadians. To learn that this dangerous woman-killer was encouraged by our justice system to pursue vulnerable women for his sexual gratification is horrifying. Many women feel like we have a justice system that is indifferent to violence directed at us. This case leaves us to feel like the justice system is the one directing the violence at us now. The scale of the failure in this case is enough to leave many people feeling hopeless, to despair that nothing will be fixed, that nothing will get better.

Those of us in the House do not have this option. We cannot turn away from the horror of this case and cases like it. It forces us to confront it. When will enough truly be enough for the House?

The House has already heard about Anastasia Kuzyk, Nathalie Warmerdam and Carol Culleton.

Carol Culleton had just retired from a career as a pay and benefits adviser with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Carol was also previously a small business owner, running a second-hand store with her husband. Carol lived in Ottawa but enjoyed spending the summer at her cottage on Kamaniskeg Lake near Combermere, a property which she was looking forward to selling, to downsize and simplify her life at retirement. Carol had been widowed in 2012, but had just started to find happiness with a new love, a man she described as her best friend. Carol Culleton loved and was loved.

Anastasia Kuzyk was a real estate agent in Wilno. She was known for being a hugely helpful, knowledgeable person with a great work ethic. Anastasia was a nature and animal lover. Anastasia was an accomplished equestrian who participated in numerous horse shows throughout her life, winning many ribbons and tro-

phies. Anastasia was originally from northern Ontario, but moved to Wilno to work as a naturalist in Algonquin Park. Anastasia lived with her sister in their Wilno home. Her mother and another sister also lived in town. Anastasia Kuzyk loved and was loved.

Nathalie Warmerdam was a health care worker and volunteer. Originally from Toronto, Nathalie moved to Eganville with her husband, son and daughter in 2005. Nathalie worked in Eganville at the community care access centre and provided in-home care to recent surgical patients. Nathalie was also incredibly passionate in volunteering for co-operative police in the Killaloe area, a local community organization dedicated to securing positive changes in policing. Nathalie's 18-year-old daughter had just graduated from Opeongo High School earlier in 2015 and her 20-year-old son, Adrian, lived with her in Eganville. Nathalie was described as a beautiful person who cared about the well-being of her community. Nathalie Warmerdam loved and was loved.

On September 22, 2015, Anastasia, Nathalie and Carol were murdered by a man with a lengthy record of violently assaulting women. It is a day that will forever be burned into the memories of Ottawa Valley communities.

As horrific as that day was, it was all the days leading up to it when this irredeemable woman beater could have been stopped. The justice system and the different boards should have recognized the inherent danger his repeated history of violence against women posed. Instead, he was repeatedly set free as part of a series of events, which show how these women lived in a slow-motion horror film.

In 2010, the police arrested him for criminally harassing a woman for over a month. On the day his trial was to begin, the Crown stayed the charges.

In June 2011, he was charged with threatening to kill his soon-to-be ex-wife. Those charges would be stayed in 2012.

In July, he was arrested for assaulting another woman. Those charges were stayed in October.

On July 27, 2012, he was charged with assaulting Nathalie, threatening her son, threatening to kill the family dog, threatening to kill his ex-wife, again causing mischief to property and breaching probation orders.

● (1805)

When he was finally arrested on September 5, he assaulted a police officer and urinated on his jail cell walls. The assault and uttering threat charges were stayed after Borutski pled guilty to assaulting an officer and urinating. At this point, a prison rug had received more justice than multiple women. His guilty plea earned him 33 days in jail, and on January 8, 2013, he was released.

On December 30, 2013, he was charged with an assault after attacking and choking Anastasia. Since he had committed his latest attack on a woman while on probation, the Crown and judge expressed their concerns about Borutski ignoring probation orders and the increasing seriousness of his crimes. Their concerns amounted to 393 days in jail, including time served.

On December 27, 2014, he was released from jail. Only 269 days later, he would begin a killing spree that would shatter three families and devastate entire communities.

On the morning of September 22, he drove to Carol's remote cottage, and by his own admission, he chased her inside. She tried to lock the doors, but he broke through a window. He attacked her, grabbing a cable TV coil and began to choke her to death while she begged for her life. Rather than flee the scene, he lit a cigarette, smoked it and left it and his DNA in Carol's sink.

Finishing his smoke break, he resumed his murder spree. Stealing Carol's money and car, he drove to the home of his next victim, Anastasia Kuzyk. Anastasia's sister, Eva, was upstairs when she heard her sister scream. He had attacked Anastasia in her kitchen, but when confronted by the sister, he went to his car and returned with a shotgun. Eva was able to run away; Anastasia was not.

While Eva was calling the police, he was on his way to his last victim's home. Nathalie was at home with her son when Borutski arrived. Nathalie had known the type of man he was over the years and had taken steps to protect herself. She kept a shotgun under her bed. She carried a panic alarm. She had security cameras installed in her home. Those cameras recorded him walking into her home. He found her and began to chase her through the house. Her son was able to flee and call the police, but by then it was too late.

In just under two hours, three women had been stalked and murdered. The next five hours would see the largest manhunt in Ottawa Valley memory. Schools were in lockdown. Helicopters with infrared cameras searched the dense bush and extensive farm fields that make up the Ottawa Valley.

It is a day seared into the memories of each and every one of my constituents. It was the day that never should have happened but for a justice system that systematically denies justice to vulnerable women. Four times in the preceding five years he had been charged with attacking a woman, and four times the charges were stayed. He violated his probation when he attacked and choked Anastasia. Despite the court taking note of his increasing violence and his utter disregard for court orders, he was sentenced to serve an additional 160 days in jail. Does that sound just?

Chantale Deschenes was beaten with a hammer and stabbed to death. Her murderer spent only 15 years behind bars. Does that sound like justice?

Marylène Levesque was the victim of a system that showed more concern for the sexual gratification of a misogynistic murderer than for her personal security. Does that sound just? No. That is not what justice sounds like.

Let me read what Ontario Superior of Court Justice Robert Maranger said when he sentenced the man who had taken Anastasia, Nathalie and Carol's lives from us. He stated:

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From time to time, a crime is so deplorable, so devoid of mercy, so cold-blooded, that denunciation, retribution and giving a sense of justice to the many victims and the community at large becomes the paramount and virtually singular consideration.

I would like to thank Justice Maranger for his words.

However, it should not take the slaying of three innocent women to remind us that serial abusers of women are not victims of society or poverty or bad parenting. They are evil men who, if given the chance, will inflict greater and greater harm on more and more women until violence against women is taken seriously. Parole boards should not let offenders out of jail before they have served their full sentences.

Mr. Borutski received 60 years. At the time of his sentencing, it was said that he would die in jail. We know only too well from recent events that only a small percentage of his sentence need be served, and the gruesomeness of this crime will be forgotten. We could again see this person on parole, and more serial murders, unless the Parole Board is fixed.

● (1810)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member really demonstrated in her remarks that the issues we are talking about today are not necessarily party-based or specifically government decisions.

Often we talk about things that take place and when something is as abhorrent as this, there is a need for us to look at it, and the government is doing just that. We are looking into it. There will be a vote on this particular motion. The level of public interest is high, and I see that as a positive thing coming out of this most tragic event.

● (1815)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I wish to retract something I said earlier in the day. The proper word would have been "disrespect," as opposed to the verb that was used.

I used the term because of the continued appearance of disrespect for women. These are not only the women who suffer at the hands of people who are let out on parole too soon by an inexperienced Parole Board. The member did say the government will be attacking that.

We have also seen the appearance of disrespect for women right here in the Chamber. Some members might remember "elbowgate", an incident when the Prime Minister elbowed a member of the NDP. There was also the groping incident. The Prime Minister said the woman involved remembered it differently and that he did not know that she was national media.

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All in all, I do wish to retract that statement and hope to go forward in a more collegial manner.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Wednesday, February 5, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House you would find unanimous consent at this time to see the clock at 6:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to see the clock at 6:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently I asked the Prime Minister why the Liberal Party favours the treatment of convicted terrorists over the treatment of Canadian veterans. The example I used was the decision by the government to disrespect Canadian soldiers, veterans and their families with the controversial \$10.5-million payoff to convicted terrorist Omar Khadr.

At the same time, the government refuses to settle a slander case with Canadian veteran Sean Bruyca, and so far has spent seven times in legal fees what the veteran is asking for to settle.

I correctly pointed out, for the benefit of Canadians, the hypocrisy in the Liberal Party policy. The excuse the Prime Minister used to justify that \$10.5-million payoff was even more lame than the ones he used during the SNC-Lavalin corruption scandal.

He claimed he wanted to save on legal fees. This is a Prime Minister who promised not to take veterans to court. It appears by his actions he misspoke. He actually meant to say, not to take terrorists to court.

We know how the current leader of the Liberal Party feels about veterans. He told a veteran in Edmonton that veterans are asking for too much. That comment is two-faced coming from a Liberal Party that gave \$10.5 million to convicted terrorist Omar Khadr.

Not only did the Liberal Party break that promise, it has spent \$180,000 in taxpayer money fighting Canadian veteran Sean Bruyca. That amount in legal fees is over seven times more than what veteran Sean Bruyca is seeking in damages for being slandered by the government, and it gets worse.

Rather than respecting Canadians with a proper response to my question, the chief Liberal Party spokesperson gave a rambling, incoherent response that had nothing to do with the question.

Why was the federal government going to such extraordinary lengths to attack Canadian veteran Sean Bruyca? It was to intimidate him into silence. To Sean's credit, he refused to be abused by the government attacking him. In an article written for CBC News, he had this to say:

Many veterans and their families are not happy about the Khadr settlement—that much is obvious. But in the climate of vicious and partisan name-calling that seems to accompany all things Khadr, veterans' reactions are being unfairly dismissed....

At the core of the issue is benefits—specifically, the gruelling adventure race veterans have to endure to plead for their parsimonious assistance...Veterans, likewise, often have to fight years—and often decades—to receive their benefits.

...Veterans are barred from suing government for mistreatment when seeking benefits. What's more, veterans are limited to using the military's rotten veterans tribunal system, one that provides "free" lawyers employed by the very department from which veterans are trying to seek benefits.

Legal settlements in Canada do not fall under taxable income, therefore [Omar] Khadr will pay no tax on his \$10.5 million...95 per cent of the benefits received by severely injured veterans and their survivors is now taxable. The court case to return to lifelong pensions continues...even though [the Prime Minister] promised to end court cases against veterans and return to lifelong pensions.

To prove permanent disability, Canadian veterans must make humiliating annual declarations that they are still missing their legs, or that their minds and spirits continue to be devoured by the lingering trauma of war. Should the most injured attempt some part-time employment for a more meaningful life, the government deducts every dollar earned. Indeed, the government already deducts pension, CPP disability, OAS and GIS from veterans' benefits. Khadr, on the other hand, gets to keep every cent of his settlement.

...But for those who have devoted their lives to defending Canada and now fight to receive their deserved compensation, watching the Canadian government simply hand over \$10.5 million to someone who allegedly fought against our ally is unsettling, to say the least.

...Among [the Prime Minister's] justifications for paying Khadr was the idea that it would have cost the government more to fight than to pay. But justice, fairness, openness and transparency about a government's actions should not be dependent on how much it costs to avoid paying a debt.

...When they see such a comprehensive government action...veterans and their fellow Canadians simply can't understand the gross discrepancy.

● (1820)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise this evening to tell the House just how much our government values the important contributions that veterans have made to Canada and the world. Their well-being and their families' well-being is something we have supported and will continue to support as we move forward. We continue working hard to restore critical access to services and support for veterans and their families resulting from the Conservative cuts to services, the closure of Veterans Affairs offices across the country and the firing of nearly 1,000 employees from Veterans Affairs Canada.

[Translation]

Over the past four years, we have invested more than \$10 billion in enhanced support and services for veterans and their families. This includes enhanced physical and mental health services, research into new treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder and related mental health issues, services for families, support for the transition to life after service, the veterans emergency fund, a new education and training benefit, and much more.

One of the first things we did was reopen the regional Veterans Affairs Canada offices across the country that had been shuttered by the previous government. We opened a new office in Surrey, British Columbia.

• (1825)

[English]

Last year, we introduced pension for life for ill and injured veterans, improving their access to care and the choices available to them. Perhaps most importantly, we listened to veterans. The minister, our caucus colleagues and I regularly engage with veterans face to face from coast to coast to coast. We hear them. One of the biggest hurdles they face is that they do not know what benefits they may be eligible for. They cannot apply for benefits that they do not know about.

We have responded. Veterans Affairs takes the initiative to inform veterans and releasing members about the services and benefits they are eligible to receive. We improved our website to make it easier for veterans to apply for benefits.

[Translation]

We have also streamlined how we make decisions regarding social benefits so that less complicated cases take less time. This allows for more time to examine and consider more complex cases. We triage disability claims and expedite treatment for people at risk. These changes are making a real difference, since veterans are now better informed and are using the benefits and services they have earned. Disability claims have increased by more than 60% since 2015. First applications have increased by more than 90%, and 97% of first applications for post-traumatic stress disorder were approved in the last fiscal year.

[English]

Members and veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces have earned their benefits and the right to be treated with care, compassion and respect. Our government is providing those benefits and services that they have earned. We have taken important strides in improving their health and well-being and we will continue to do so.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, to conclude the quote in the article written to CBC News, “Why are those willing to make the supreme sacrifice for our country so persistently left behind?” The Prime Minister has claimed to have learned his lesson when Canadians reduced his government to a minority. Canadian veterans deserve the respect and a proper answer.

Together with my colleagues on the Veterans Affairs committee and in the Conservative Party, we will be working for the veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP, who we learned

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have no access to care for operational stress injuries. Their program has been defunded. I encourage RCMP and veterans, as well as the Canadian Armed Forces, to make contact with me and other members of my team so that we can work together, with a similar goal in mind, to ensure that there is a seamless transition when they move from the forces or the RCMP into their civilian lives.

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, our government understands the importance of listening to veterans, their families and their advocates. It also understands the importance of hearing what they have to say and acting accordingly.

[English]

As I said earlier, we have invested \$10 billion in enhanced benefits and services for veterans and their families. We hired more staff to give veterans better access and we have sped up the processing of applications. We have implemented critical new programs, improved services to veterans and their families, and have undertaken the hard work of reversing the destruction that the previous Conservative government brought to veterans and Veterans Affairs.

[Translation]

There is still work to be done. We will continue to listen to veterans' concerns and improve the way we deliver the services and benefits they so rightly deserve.

[English]

HEALTH

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents sent me here to fight for them and to fight for all Canadians. It is truly an honour to serve on the health committee where I can do what I came here to do: stand up for some of Canada's most vulnerable.

I would like to address the question I asked last Tuesday on behalf of a couple in Langley who were waiting for their pregnant daughter and her family to be extracted from Wuhan. I am very pleased to inform the House that the family had found a way onto a British aircraft and are now safely evacuated from the quarantine zone.

Since the last time I addressed the House, I have had dozens of Canadians with family in China contact me for help and answers. They are concerned about the availability of accurate and timely information. Currently, there is no way for families to confirm if their submitted information is properly filed. At this point, there is no way to confirm which persons will be on which plane. There is no way to confirm which permanent residents are scheduled to be repatriated. There also remains a great deal of concern regarding the travel arrangements that will be provided to unaccompanied minors who are in the care of Chinese citizens.

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Yesterday, we heard at committee that there are processes in place, but based on my follow-up conversations with concerned Canadians, there still appears to be a disappointing lack of clarification. Yes, Global Affairs has reached out to those affected; however, in many cases, they are not receiving a clearly communicated plan regarding the details of their evacuation. There are still a lot of unanswered questions.

Last night, I spoke to a couple from B.C. The spouse who is a citizen has received confirmation that he will be evacuated, but the evacuation plan for the spouse who is a permanent resident has still not been communicated. I spoke with another fellow whose baby, two-year-old Gavin, will be accompanied by one or more of his grandparents who are Chinese citizens and will act as his guardians. We were asked in committee yesterday that cost will not be an obstacle for Canadians, and yet this father was asked, “What kind of health insurance do Gavin’s grandparents have?”

While we are on the topic of a clearly communicated plan, I would like to share another story with the House, which was reported to me by an employee of the Vancouver airport. This man, who I will call Jack, works for CATSA. Jack is concerned for the safety of his co-workers and passengers at the airport. He told me that, unlike CBSA, the pre-board screening officers do not have a dedicated area, nor training, nor guidance, nor identifying tools to deal with outbound passengers who may be displaying symptoms. Health Canada says that the virus is not airborne and is preventable if one washes one’s hands and stays at least two metres away from potential carriers. Jack said that was not possible. Screening officers come into direct contact with passengers. Further, his employer is not providing them with face masks and had even asked that officers refrain from wearing them to avoid panic.

What concerns Canadians as much as the lack of communication is the delay in coming up with a plan. A week ago, many of our allies had already begun evacuating their citizens, which is why the daughter of the couple from Langley were able to get on a British plane. We were told at committee that this sort of coordinated effort is extremely complicated. While I appreciate that, it was equally complicated for the other nations to evacuate their citizens. The U.S. has just completed its last flight and we have not done our first.

Why is the government’s response to this global health emergency so much slower than that of our allies, and when will every affected Canadian know how they or their families will be brought home from China?

• (1830)

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to reiterate that the Government of Canada takes safety and security of Canadians abroad and at home very seriously.

From the moment that this virus was identified as a public health risk, we have been exploring every avenue possible to assist Canadians in departing from Wuhan, China. This includes announcing that the Government of Canada has chartered an airplane to take Canadians from the affected area in China back to Canada.

Canadian officials in Ottawa and in China are working closely with their Chinese counterparts to work out all the details. We have also been collaborating with our partners to identify the best possible means to assist Canadians who wish to depart. Canadian officials are also in constant contact with our international counterparts, including the United States and the United Kingdom, to ensure co-operation and the sharing of best practices.

We have deployed the standing rapid deployment team members and other government officials to Hubei province to coordinate logistics surrounding the arrival and departure of the evacuation flight. This is a unit of specialized officials deployed during emergencies to provide critical services to Canadians who are in distress.

This situation has been evolving rapidly, and the number of Canadians asking for assistance is quickly changing. We had two requests eight days ago. As of today we have around 325 requests for departure assistance from Hubei, and that number may have changed since I got these notes.

We will do everything in our power to keep families together whenever possible. This means providing consular advice and assistance to permanent residents as well as citizens to the extent possible in the local context.

To protect the health of all Canadians, Chinese authorities will perform health screening and immigration controls before Canadians can board this special flight. Health screening will also be conducted by Canadian medical personnel before boarding, during the flight and at the final destination. Canadians appearing with symptoms will not be able to board the aircraft, and we will ensure appropriate protocols for Canadians once they arrive in Canada to protect their health and the health and safety of all Canadians.

The Government of Canada’s priority is always the safety and security of Canadian citizens at home and abroad. I would like to take a moment to thank consular officials who have been working night and day on this situation. Canadians should be proud of their public servants and give them thanks for everything they have been doing all year in really extraordinary circumstances. They provide credible and timely information through our travel advice website to enable Canadians to make well-informed decisions regarding any travel abroad. Travel advisories are updated quickly to respond to events that may affect the safety of Canadians abroad. As such, on January 29 we increased our risk level to avoid non-essential travel to China due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus.

I want to thank the member for Cloverdale—Langley City for raising this concern. It is a concern that is shared by the government. It is a concern we are hearing equally. We are responding and Canadians will be safe and kept healthy.

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• (1835)

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, we are all very happy to know that a plane has been chartered. However, there are still Canadians affected by the coronavirus who have very serious and unanswered questions. Canadians should be able to rest assured that their government has their backs and can solve these types of problems quickly.

The member opposite highlighted the complexity of this sort of evacuation plan, but other countries were able to execute their plans much quicker. What can be done to reduce the complexity of this sort of operation so that in future, Canadians will no longer be jealous of other governments and their ability to handle an evacuation?

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, Canadians can rest assured that we have their backs. We will protect them and they will be safe. We will bring them home as soon as possible.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to a question I asked on December 12. The question was quite simple. I wanted to know what the Prime Minister's response was to the crisis in the auto sector.

As members know, there have been a lot of challenges, especially in my community of Oshawa. We all know what happened in Oshawa. It has been a trend over the last four years, the uncertainty for our manufacturing sector. We have seen delay after delay. For example, the original TPP was ready to be signed right after the election, but it was not signed. We almost lost CETA. We are just getting to the new NAFTA.

I hear from manufacturers over and over again about the cost of electricity, the uncertainty environmental regulations and other regulations that are unique to Canada and how that affects our competitiveness.

I asked the Liberals what their plan was. The Conservatives brought forth three motions to study the auto sector and to give the government some ideas on what could be done. Again, the Liberals voted them down.

A lot of people are concerned about the government and how serious it takes our auto sector. Everybody knows we lost our plant in Oshawa. It was not allocated new product and 2,500 jobs were lost because of that. Around the same time, Chrysler announced 1,500 job losses and Ford announced 450 job losses. That was 4,500 job losses in the auto sector alone.

In November of last year, Canada suffered the worst single month in job losses since 2009. I remember you were here, Mr. Speaker, in that great recession. During recessions and leading up to recessions, there are job losses. This is at a time when the world is expanding. However, Canada lost 71,200 jobs in November and 27,500 of those job losses were in our manufacturing sector. That is the biggest job loss in years.

It is very timely that the parliamentary secretary is here. Right now, we are debating the new NAFTA. People who have interest in the auto sector want to find out what this will mean. We have asked the Liberals for a cost-benefit analysis and they are still not forthcoming. In this agreement, it is the first time Canada agreed to

ideas of quotas in the automotive sector. We really want to know what that will cost.

We have new rules for the aluminum sector. Aluminum is a big part of automotive sector. It is used to build cars. There is concern about circumvention from Chinese aluminum through Mexico. The Liberals seem to forget this is about people.

I remember when the announcement was made in Oshawa. Our leader was there. He was at the gates, talking to workers, seeing what we could do to help, showing support. Unfortunately, the Liberals did not even show up. The Prime Minister did not even call our mayor for two weeks, and only after increased pressure from me in the House, as well as from other members.

People in the auto sector deserve an explanation. We would like to know how much the new NAFTA will increase the cost of cars. With jobs in Mexico now at \$16 per hour, how many of those jobs will move north? What is the advantage in this agreement for jobs to stay in Canada instead of the United States?

• (1840)

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to emphasize that our government is squarely focused on ensuring that Canadians have access to good, well-paying jobs. Manufacturing has traditionally been an excellent source of such types of jobs, especially in the auto sector.

This government has always supported the auto workers and the auto sector. Through the innovation and skills plan, we have shaped a policy environment designed to strengthen the competitiveness of the Canadian industry. We have also established the strategic innovation fund, ensuring this flagship program is an effective tool for attracting new investments to Canada.

To cite one example for my good friend, we might as well talk about Linamar, which, after we introduced this program, has reinvested. Of course, it is a company that is very much a part of the auto supply chain.

We fully recognize that we have more work to do and have a plan that will make a concrete difference. Automotive manufacturing is the touchstone of Canada's economy. We want to invest in innovation and skills development today so Canadians and Canadian companies can succeed in the economy of tomorrow.

Since the beginning of 2016, the Government of Canada has leveraged \$454 million to support the automotive industry, which has announced over \$6.7 billion in new investments in Canada. We support the research and development that will lead to the next generation of transportation. We are seeing the sector adjust by meeting the demands for the vehicles of the future, vehicles that will be connected, automated, shared and electric.

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Going forward, we are committed to addressing climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from all sectors, including the transportation sector. Advances in vehicle technologies, such as zero-emission vehicles, have the potential to enhance the productivity, efficiency and environmental performance of Canada's transportation system, as well as drive innovation and economic growth.

Canada retains a mature automotive sector and we are building expertise in advanced technologies, a highly skilled workforce and strong R and D capacity.

All of this is part of our comprehensive plan to ensure that Canada is successful in the future economy, in the auto industry and indeed in every industry. We believe passionately in Canada's automotive manufacturers and the quality of the vehicles produced by Canadian workers.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, the member will get no argument from me on that. Unfortunately, we lost our assembly plant in Oshawa. It had some of the best quality vehicles manufactured in the world, but we still lost it.

I would ask the member this. What is the government's plan? What is its strategy? We have the automotive action plan. I know, Mr. Speaker, you even had input in putting that through. However, the member does not seem to realize that in November, there were 27,500 manufacturing job losses. I was talking to him about the 2,500 job losses in Oshawa. There were 1,500 at Chrysler and 450 at Ford. Now we have this new NAFTA.

The parliamentary secretary is here so I was wondering this. The government would not have signed an agreement without a cost-benefit analysis. What is this new NAFTA deal going to do to increase the cost of cars for Canadians and affect the competitiveness of Canadians? How many jobs are going to be brought to Canada because of the new agreement?

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the member is fully aware, from day one our government was in constant contact with Unifor and General Motors Canada to push for better outcomes.

As I emphasized earlier, our government is passionately committed to investing in innovation and skills development to ensure that Canadians and Canadian companies are prepared to succeed in the economy of the future. Our investments in innovation, through the innovation and skills plan, have helped bolster Canada's robust automotive cluster by supporting reinvestments in Canadian vehicle assembly plants by global automakers. We will continue to believe strongly in Canada's automotive manufacturers and the quality of the vehicles produced by Canadian workers.

● (1845)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:45 p.m.)

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