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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 2, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*English*]

JUDGES ACT

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.) moved that Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in support of Bill C-3, an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, which is identical to former Bill C-5.

I am delighted to be reintroducing this important piece of legislation today. I know we in the House are all anxious to see the work that was started by the Hon. Rona Ambrose in 2017 with the introduction of Bill C-337 come to fruition with the quick passage of this bill in this session of Parliament.

Regrettably, Parliament's consideration of Bill C-5 was abruptly interrupted and the study of the justice committee halted by a health crisis that has created unprecedented challenges to all aspects of Canadian society, including our justice system. The pandemic has exposed and exploited underlying conditions that have long plagued our justice system. It brought into stark relief the unacceptable barriers to accessing justice for the most vulnerable in our society. The reintroduction of the bill comes at a time when the need to protect our most vulnerable has never been clearer, nor the importance of ensuring a justice system that treats everyone fairly and with respect more critical.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-3 is designed to enhance public confidence in our criminal justice system, and in particular the confidence of survivors of sexual assault. It is hard to imagine anyone more vulnerable in the criminal justice system than the women who find the courage to report sexual assault.

The bill will ensure that survivors of sexual assault are treated with dignity and respect by the courts and will give them confi-

dence that the judge in their case will enforce sexual assault laws fairly and accurately, as Parliament intended.

[*English*]

It has never been more critical that all of us who serve the public are equipped with the right tools and understanding to ensure that everyone is treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve, no matter what their background or their experiences. This would enhance the confidence of survivors of sexual assault and the Canadian public, more broadly, in our justice system. There is no room in our courts for harmful myths or stereotypes.

I know that our government's determination to tackle this problem is shared by parliamentarians from across Canada and of all political persuasions. The bill before us today will help ensure that those appointed to a superior court would undertake to participate in continuing education in relation to sexual assault law and social context.

As the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, I take very seriously my responsibility to uphold judicial independence, a constitutional principle that is a cornerstone of our democracy. Judicial independence means that judges must be free to decide each case on its own merits without interference or influence of any kind from any source. For this reason, judicial independence requires judicial control of judicial education, and I salute the work that is being done by the Canadian Judicial Council as well as the National Judicial Institute in Canada in the training they have already begun to provide. Applying this principle to the current bill means that our government's efforts to ensure judges participate in education on matters related to sexual assault law and social context must not undermine the independence of the judiciary.

In that vein, I would like to describe the key elements of the proposed legislation. Bill C-3, as noted previously, is identical to former Bill C-5 and essentially the same as former private member's bill, Bill C-337. Importantly, the bill includes the amendments to Bill C-337 passed unanimously by the House of Commons to include social context education within the requirements of the bill. This requirement is specifically aimed at providing those who preside over cases with deeper insights and best practices to help them better navigate the social and cultural factors that they will likely come across in their time on the bench.

Government Orders

Bill C-3 also includes the amendments recommended by the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in its study of Bill C-337.

• (1010)

The first key element of the bill is that it proposes to amend the Judges Act to require candidates for superior court judicial appointments to commit to undertaking training in matters related to sexual assault law and social context. This becomes part of the application process. This commitment will become an eligibility requirement for appointment to a superior court.

It is no easy task to bolster public confidence, in particular the confidence of sexual assault survivors, that our criminal justice system will treat victims with dignity, fairness and respect. This is a particularly acute challenge when there are reports in the media of judges doing exactly the opposite. We hear of highly publicized cases in which judges have relied on stereotypes or myths about how a victim of sexual assault should have behaved and have misapplied the carefully crafted law intended to prevent this.

The undertaking to commit to training is aimed at ensuring that Canada's highly developed law and jurisprudence on sexual assault are appropriately applied in the courtroom. It will also ensure that newly appointed judges receive the education and training necessary to understand and appreciate the social context within which they perform their functions, so that personal or societal biases or myths and stereotypes do not have any bearing on their decisions.

Over the past three decades the criminal law has undergone significant reform to encourage reporting of sexual assaults, to improve the criminal justice system's response to sexualized violence and to counter discriminatory views of survivors that stem from myths and stereotypes about how a true victim is expected to behave. As a result, the Criminal Code prohibits all forms of non-consensual sexual activity, provides a clear definition of consent, identifies when consent cannot be obtained and sets out rules for the admissibility of certain types of evidence to deter the introduction of these harmful myths and stereotypes.

Canada's sexual assault law is robust, but is necessarily complex. It applies to the most intimate of human interactions, so to be effective it must be properly understood and applied. This is why judicial education in this area is so significant and Bill C-3 so important.

[*Translation*]

The second key element is to require that the Canadian Judicial Council develop this sexual-assault training only after it consults with groups and individuals that it considers appropriate, including sexual assault survivors and the groups that support them. This will give the council the opportunity to gather different perspectives on sexual assault informed by the experiences and knowledge of the community.

[*English*]

Transformative change across the criminal justice system will require a sustained collaborative effort by all actors in the justice system, with the support of stakeholders and civil society. Training is needed not only for judges but for all actors in the justice system.

We are working with our provincial and territorial counterparts and justice sector stakeholders toward more comprehensive efforts. However, the pivotal public and determinative role judges play must also be taken into account.

[*Translation*]

The third key component of the bill will require the Canadian Judicial Council to submit to the justice minister an annual report to be tabled in this Parliament about the training on sexual assault law that has been provided and the number of judges who attended. This requirement is designed to enhance accountability in the training of sitting judges on these matters while still acting as an incentive to encourage their participation.

[*English*]

The final element of the bill would amend the Criminal Code to require judges to provide reasons for decisions under sexual assault provisions of the Criminal Code. This amendment is intended to enhance the transparency of judicial decisions made in sexual assault proceedings by rendering them accessible, either in writing or on the record of the proceedings. I would like to mention that this proposed amendment to require judges to provide reasons in the determination of sexual assault matters specifically is complementary to three existing requirements.

• (1015)

The requirement to provide reasons will be placed in the other sexual assault provisions in the Criminal Code. This will help ensure that all provisions related to sexual offending are clear and accessible to those applying them. This is part of the effort to prevent the misapplication of sexual assault law by helping to ensure that decisions in sexual assault matters are not influenced by myths or stereotypes about sexual assault victims and how they ought to behave. This is consistent with the Supreme Court of Canada's finding that such myths and stereotypes distort the truth-seeking function of the court.

[*Translation*]

Being a judge comes with great responsibility. I would like to quote the Hon. Justice Charles Gonthier, former justice of the Supreme Court of Canada:

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

Justice Gonthier then added the following:

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

Since judges play such a crucial role in upholding democracy and the rule of law, the public rightly expects their conduct to be exemplary. To quote the Canadian Judicial Council:

[1] From the time they are considered for appointment to the Bench, and every day thereafter, superior court judges in Canada are expected to be knowledgeable jurists. They are also expected to demonstrate a number of personal attributes including knowledge of social issues, an awareness of changes in social values, humility, fairness, empathy, tolerance, consideration and respect for others.

[2] In short, Canadians expect their judges to know the law but also to possess empathy and to recognize and question any past personal attitudes and sympathies that might prevent them from acting fairly.

[*English*]

In order for judges to be able to meet these public expectations, it is imperative that they keep abreast of developments in the law and the ever-changing social context in which they carry out their duties. To ensure excellence in judgments, judges must have legal knowledge that is as relevant as it is excellent so that they can make the difficult and life-changing decisions entrusted to them. For this reason, legal education is an essential element of the legislation under consideration.

The bill is carefully tailored to uphold the principle of judicial independence. In particular, it includes the recommendations of the Senate committee for amendments to Bill C-337 that were carefully designed to address the specific concerns raised by representatives of the judiciary.

[*Translation*]

In that regard, I would like to point out that members of the judiciary appeared before the House committee to call for additional amendments to Bill C-5. It is important to note that a respectful dialogue occurred between representatives of the judicial and legislative branches with regard to Bill C-337 and Bill C-5. I trust that this will also be the case with this bill. The partners in this dialogue all want survivors of sexual assault to have faith in the justice system and to be treated with the respect and dignity they deserve when dealing with that system.

Canada is lucky to have one of the most independent, competent and reputable judiciaries in the world. The Canadian Judicial Council, with the support and co-operation of the National Judicial Institute, is a world leader in training judges. The Canadian judiciary is very committed to ensuring the best training for judges. I commend them for their co-operation in this regard. Finally, Canada is a pioneer in social context education in the justice system.

● (1020)

In its professional development policy, the Canadian Judicial Council recognizes that, in order to be effective, training for judges must include social context education so that court decisions are not influenced by personal or social bias, myths or stereotypes.

Given how important this is, the National Judicial Institute seeks to ensure that all programs cover substantive law, skills development and social context education.

[*English*]

It is important to acknowledge the significant contribution of both the Canadian Judicial Council and the National Judicial Institute to ensuring judges have access to the training they need.

Government Orders

We are blessed with a strong and independent judiciary in Canada. We cannot take this for granted. As parliamentarians, we must ensure that we safeguard and promote it. This bill seeks to balance a legitimate need to enhance public confidence with carefully preserving the judiciary's ability to control judicial education.

[*Translation*]

The government also allocated significant resources to support this undertaking. The 2017 budget contained \$2.7 million over five years for the Canadian Judicial Council and \$500,000 per year thereafter to ensure more judges get access to professional development with a greater emphasis on issues related to sex, gender and cultural sensitivity.

Our government is also working with stakeholders to ensure that appropriate training is available to all members of the Canadian judiciary, specifically those not appointed by the federal government.

That said, I hope this bill will prompt everyone in the justice system to take a close look at other measures we can take to bolster the confidence of survivors of sexual assault and the public in our justice system.

[*English*]

Finally, following Ms. Ambrose's introduction of the former Bill C-337, a number of provinces followed suit and did just that. At least one province, Prince Edward Island, enacted similar legislation, and I understand that others are carefully considering policy and legislative responses. I note that other countries have already enacted legislation similar to what is being proposed. It is time for all of our jurisdictions to act.

While we believe that reintroducing Bill C-3 is a crucial step, it is not the only action we can take as a government. We have prioritized supporting victims and survivors of crime by a range of different avenues. These include providing funding to provinces and territories to allow them to develop enhanced programs, to provide free and independent legal advice and, in some cases, representation for survivors of sexual assault. Also included is our government's commitment, as emphasized in the Speech from the Throne, to build on the gender-based violence strategy and work with partners to develop a national action plan.

Government Orders

This bill sends a message to all Canadians, and survivors of sexual assault in particular, that their elected officials are listening, that we care about what happens to their cases, and that we are prepared and committed to take whatever action we can to ensure that our justice system is fair and responsive. It is incumbent on all of us: legislators, judges, prosecutors, police and the public.

[*Translation*]

Right now, there is considerable enthusiasm across the country for meaningful, sustainable changes to our justice system.

This bill is a small but important step toward achieving that. It gives parliamentarians an opportunity to act on their beliefs and show all Canadians, especially survivors of sexual assault, that their voices matter and that anyone who has the courage to report an assault will be listened to and treated with the dignity and respect every member of our community is entitled to.

I urge all of my parliamentary colleagues to take this step toward a more constructive, resilient justice system that is more responsive to the needs of those it serves.

[*English*]

I call on all of my colleagues to support this important non-partisan bill.

• (1025)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that is important for all women across the country. When Rona Ambrose brought it forth in the 42nd Parliament, she stood alongside all the members in this chamber, as well as all the leaders, to put it through. However, I am very concerned with where we are going next.

By no means does the minister have to respond about this specific court case, but just a few months ago there was a court case on the rights of the person accused when intoxication became an issue. One of the biggest things about this bill, therefore, is to make sure that women and those who have gone through sexual assault have confidence in the legal system, but what about this new idea about intoxication and its use in June of 2020?

What are the minister's feelings about this, and how can we continue to protect survivors of sexual assault?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I share the hon. member's concern with that judgment, which overturned a part of the Criminal Code. That decision is being appealed. The carriage of that case is by the provincial prosecution service in Ontario. My understanding is that it is under appeal, and I therefore cannot comment on the actual substance of the case.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-3 seems extremely important for renewing victims' trust in the justice system. The reporting process is often central and victims have to be able to speak out with confidence.

In the summer, we saw the terrible consequences of the pandemic on women, who have suffered violence and assault. I know that the issue of violence against women is very important to the government and I would like to know how Bill C-3 lines up with the

Minister for Women and Gender Equality's plan to develop measures to address that violence.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question and I share her empathy.

The bill we are talking about today is part of the solution since it will ensure greater empathy for victims of sexual assault. Obviously, in the context of COVID-19, this is only as partial solution. We will work together in the House to address the stress caused by COVID-19 that has given rise to an increase in domestic violence.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his reintroduction of this bill. I would like to say from the outset that he can count on the support of the New Democratic Party to get this bill to committee. We find ourselves in a strange situation being at the second reading debate of this bill, because the previous version already had two sittings at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, so we have already had testimony from witnesses. I look forward to that work continuing.

I want to take this rare opportunity that I have to ask the minister a question. Bills, we know, are the product of the demands Canadians have on their Parliament. In fact, they are the product of the social context we operate in, so I want to ask him about systemic racism and the demands of the Black, indigenous and persons of colour community that have come out over the months of 2020. I want to tie this into the TRC call to action number 27, which called for the Federation of Law Societies of Canada to ensure lawyers receive appropriate training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism.

Does the minister believe there is legislative room to include this in the training for judges?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I share the hon. member's concern. There are a number of things I would like to outline in response to his question. First of all, the actual question he asks is whether we can, I suppose, expand this bill to include other judicial actors.

It is absolutely necessary that all actors in the judicial system, and indeed other decision-makers at a variety of levels such as federal, provincial, etc., have social context training and have this kind of training in the rules, myths and stereotypes of sexual assault. While I believe it is absolutely critical for all judicial and legal actors to have it, there is a particularity about judges, which is their independence.

This bill is carefully crafted to protect judicial independence and to work with the NJI and the CJC. We can probably be more proactive with respect to other actors, but it would be more appropriate to do that in a separate piece of legislation. I certainly share the member's concern.

• (1030)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as a member of Parliament in Toronto and also as parliamentary secretary, I have heard extensive concerns from people over a number of years about making the courtroom environment more hospitable to people who dare to litigate or bring complaints forward. That concern is accentuated in the context of women who are survivors of sexual assault.

I was wondering if the minister could explain to the chamber the notion of social context in making the courtroom environment more hospitable and sensitized to sexual assault survivors in the context of indigenous women. We know, from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls inquiry, that they are disproportionately encountering and facing sexual violence.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, as always, the parliamentary secretary tends to ask me very hard questions and I hope this time I have a better answer.

Social context is important because it points to a variety of factors that ought to be taken into account in order to understand and empathize with survivors of sexual assault and other cases, and then to reach appropriate judgments. With respect to indigenous peoples, these factors include ethnicity and race, the particularity of the nation and traditions in question and, again, combatting myths and stereotypes. We saw very tragically this week the result of certain myths and stereotypes when an indigenous woman went to a hospital. Therefore, we need to combat those myths and stereotypes.

With respect to indigenous women, there are certain particular myths. We saw that in MMIWG. More comprehensive training in what is called the intersectionality of these factors will help our judges get to better decisions.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, when I first rose to ask the minister a question, it was not going to start with this observation, but when the minister mentioned stereotypes, I think the other phrase for that is systemic racism. That runs throughout Canadian society, and anti-indigenous racism is far more prevalent than most Canadians of settler culture would ever want to admit. However, we just have to look, and it is everywhere.

I wanted to comment on this bill and thank the minister for bringing it forward. It started out, as he referenced, as a private member's bill from the former interim leader of the Conservative Party, who is a friend to many of us who had the honour of serving with her. Rona Ambrose was of enormous assistance to me when I was bringing forward a private member's bill of my own, when she was minister of health, to deal with the terrible tragedy of Lyme disease, which continues to affect far too many people in this country. I wanted to publicly acknowledge again what a fine parliamentarian and wonderful person Rona Ambrose was to work with in this House.

Government Orders

Given the all-party support now, as it got stalled in the Senate for quite a while, and now that we have this government bill before us, what steps can be taken in terms of our procedures? We know we can fast-track things with all-party consent.

Can we not get this passed today?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, on a positive note, I share the respect that the member has for Rona Ambrose, particularly in the context of having first brought forward this bill. I also share the absolute horror of understanding the systemic racism that exists in our justice system. I assure all our colleagues in the House that I will do my very best to combat systemic racism in every aspect of my portfolio as we move forward.

I hope we will have unanimous consent. I would love to move forward immediately. I thank the hon. member for her suggestion. Members of the government will do everything we can to get this through as quickly as possible, and we are open to suggestions.

• (1035)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

It is my honour to join in virtually today to speak to Bill C-3—

The Deputy Speaker: I will interrupt the hon. member momentarily. As the member may know, this being the first round of speeches pertaining to the bill before us, in order to split one's time with another member, the member needs unanimous consent to do so.

I will ask at this point if the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock has the unanimous consent of the House to split her time.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Hearing no dissenting voices, it is agreed.

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my apologies, I was so anxious to get to what I was going to say, I forgot to ask for that permission. I thank all members.

It is certainly my honour to be speaking today on Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, concerning sexual assault. This legislation has special significance to me as a lawyer, a woman, a proud mother of four, a child survivor of sexual violence myself and, most importantly, a lifelong advocate for victims of crime and sexual assault, including men and women, boys and girls.

Government Orders

Bill C-3, formerly known as Bill C-337, was first introduced in the House of Commons in February 2017 by the Hon. Rona Ambrose. It has received a tremendous amount of support from parliamentarians and stakeholders. I would like to take this opportunity to also thank Ms. Ambrose for initially introducing this long-overdue piece of legislation and for her strong advocacy on this vital issue.

Conservatives were proud to support the just act in the last Parliament because we recognize that far too often our justice system fails to respect the experiences of victims of sexual assault. This legislation was part of our election platform in the last election. I am very pleased to see the current government put partisanship aside and adopted the bill in March of this year.

Bill C-3 would ensure that trust is built and maintained in our judicial system, and specifically, that victims of sexual assault are respected by that system when they choose to come forward. We know that only a small fraction, as few as 5% to 10%, of sexual assaults are reported.

Sexually assaulted at age 12, I know that I only told my mother when I was in my 40s. I was a child, I was afraid and I never told authorities. According to a Justice Canada study of survivors, approximately two-thirds of them stated a lack of confidence in the police, the court process and the criminal justice system in general. The process is even more overwhelming for children.

It is of utmost importance that Canada's members of Parliament address head-on this under-reporting and lack of confidence by breaking down the barriers that discourage victims of sexual assault from coming forward.

We must increase transparency in any court's decision through increased judicial training and accountability. This legislation would go a long way to doing just that. Bill C-3 would amend the Judges Act to restrict eligibility of who may be appointed as a judge of a superior court, requiring the individual to undertake and participate in continuing education on matters related to sexual assault law and social context, including attending seminars.

This training would help judges navigate the sensitivities commonly at the heart of these cases and allow them to better understand the social context in which the alleged crimes took place. We want to ensure judges are fully equipped with a profound understanding of the law that must be applied to the facts of each case. Bill C-3 would also require the Canadian Judicial Council to gather data and submit an annual report to Parliament on the delivery and participation in sexual assault information seminars established by them.

Finally, Bill C-3 would amend the Criminal Code to require appointed judges to provide written reasons for decisions made in sexual assault cases. Together, these requirements would ensure that Superior Court judges have the knowledge and skills necessary to properly handle sexual assault trials, recognize the challenges and trauma often experienced by victims, restore faith and confidence in our judicial system, and treat those victims with the dignity and respect they deserve.

As a family lawyer for many years, I dealt with too many cases where spousal violence against a female partner or spouse, and

against children and stepchildren, were factors in separation, divorce and recovery.

As a volunteer board member active in supporting substance abuse recovery, I saw the devastating effects of sexual violence on victims who often dealt with it through self-harm and lives given over to addiction.

As a former member of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, I also understand that presiding over sensitive cases is not an easy task. I know our judges from coast to coast put in long hours of hard work to ensure the fairness of the judicial process.

● (1040)

However, the fact remains that on too many occasions, when deciding these cases, judges have improperly relied on or allowed into their courtroom myths and stereotypes about the expected behaviour of a victim of sexual assault and allowed evidence that should have been excluded. This is not okay.

In 2017, the Alberta Court of Appeal ordered a new trial of a 55-year-old Alberta man accused of repeatedly sexually assaulting his adolescent stepdaughter over a period of six years. At trial, even though the judge found the stepfather's evidence unbelievable, the appeal court found he relied on these myths and stereotypes about how a victim of sexual assault should behave. In delivering a finding of not guilty, the trial judge noted he had doubts about the case because the alleged victim had told the police she "kind of" got along with her stepfather and described their relationship as, "okay, I guess."

In the trial decision the judge stated:

...one would expect that a victim of sexual abuse would demonstrate behaviours consistent with that abuse or at least some change of behaviour such as avoiding the perpetrator;

The Alberta Court of Appeal rightfully disagreed and expressed the following:

This appeal represents an example of how deeply ingrained and seductive these myths and stereotypes can be.

Unfortunately, this is merely one of many examples.

Government Orders

In 2019, the Supreme Court of Canada held that a man who allegedly sexually assaulted and killed Métis woman Cindy Gladue should be retried, after evidence of Ms. Gladue's sexual history was mishandled at trial. Justice Karakatsanis explained that admitting evidence of prior sexual history makes jurors more likely to accept the harmful myth that past sexual behaviour suggests a greater likelihood that the victim consented to the alleged sexual assault, in this case one so brutal that it caused Ms. Gladue to bleed to death in a motel bathroom.

Similarly, in another 2019 Supreme Court case, *R. v. Goldfinch*, the court found the trial judge had improperly admitted evidence about the complainant's sexual history with the alleged perpetrator, which may have led the jury to decide the case based on the mistaken belief that prior consent means present consent.

All this to say there have been far too many cases in our society where myths and stereotypes have permeated the courtroom and where both judge and jury have been unduly influenced by the expected behaviour of a victim of sexual assault. Misinformation about the experience of victims of sexual assault and abuse has led judges to poor decision-making, resulting in the miscarriage of justice, and has caused unnecessary appeals and retrials.

As legislators, we must understand and appreciate the new and revisited trauma felt by victims throughout the course of these trials. If a trial is handled appropriately, appeals and retrials may be avoided. It is important that we keep myths and stereotypes out of the courtroom. It is essential that the justice system treat victims of sexual assault with dignity and the respect they deserve. It is imperative that the victims of sexual assault have confidence in the judicial system. We must do our part to break down the barriers that have prevented victims from coming forward in the past. This bill, through increased training and accountability, would address each of these issues and would tell victims of sexual assault loud and clear the Canadian government has their backs.

Of course, our criminal justice system is built on the proud principle that an accused is innocent until proven guilty. I want to ensure Canadians that this bill, and the training it proposes, will not prejudice the accused; instead, it will ensure that the scales of justice are fair and balanced, at the same time compassionate, and make certain that victims of sexual assault have access to the justice they deserve and their faith restored.

Please join me in keeping faith with sexual assault victims by supporting Bill C-3. Let their voices be fairly heard.

• (1045)

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, it pleases my colleagues and me greatly that we are introducing this bill. I suspect if you were to canvass the House there is a very good chance you would see unanimous support for the bill itself, as we all understand and appreciate it. In fact, a former leader of the Conservative Party suggested to the House that we move relatively quickly on legislation such as this.

Would the member opposite not agree there are opportunities for the House to act relatively quickly on legislation and that this is a

good example of legislation we should strive to pass in an appropriate amount of time?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I very much support this bill, as I have just stated. I agree that, to the extent possible, we should move forward as quickly as we are able, given our procedures.

It is a very important bill. It sends a very strong message to vulnerable Canadians. I would like to see to it passed.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that it is looking more and more likely that we have unanimous consent to get this bill to committee.

However, while this bill is aiming to amend the Judges Act, I am just wondering about the member's thoughts on other federal actors who have a judicial role. I am thinking of people in the Parole Board of Canada and the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, as well as members who serve in our Canada Border Services Agency and in the RCMP.

Does the member have an opinion on whether this kind of training would benefit those actors, and whether there is maybe legislative room to also include those actors so that we do not have this perpetuation of myths and stereotypes?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I agree that this is the kind of training and understanding that should be more widespread. We certainly have to start somewhere, and this bill is an excellent start. As I said in my remarks, it is overdue.

I believe the hon. member has heard members of the Conservative Party speak previously with respect to the Parole Board and other actors in the judicial system. It is very important that this is better understood and that those who are victims are fairly heard, and that they know that they can be heard and respected in what they have to say.

The treatment of these things and the way it is approached is vital.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to tell us about the training being suggested.

We need to provide judges with not just initial training, but continuing education as well. That would allow justices to enhance their knowledge over time and adapt to different realities. As the issue of sexual assault evolves, so will the law and training.

I would like her to comment on the need to ensure continuing education above all.

Government Orders

• (1050)

[*English*]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, this is such an important part of this bill. It is far too easy to maybe take one little course and then get on about life, and that life in this instance is a judicial life, making decisions every day.

The ongoing aspect is very important, and I think it will improve the quality. It is also a constant reminder that if you are sitting in judgment on these cases, the accused must be fairly treated but the victim must be fairly heard. It is a very important part of access to justice. This is the type of crime that goes across all socio-economic sectors of our society. Anyone involved in the system must know, and have confidence, that the people listening have some understanding of what this is about.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be rising today to debate Bill C-3, an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, otherwise known as the just act. This is an important piece of legislation. A version of it was first introduced in 2017 by former Conservative leader, Rona Ambrose. It was then called Bill C-337, the proposed judicial accountability through sexual assault law training act. I want to thank Ms. Ambrose for her leadership role in championing this bill and its important content over the last few years.

Ms. Ambrose has been a strong voice for women and sexual assault survivors. Bill C-337 received widespread support from stakeholders and from parliamentarians across party lines. Canada's Conservatives were proud to support the just act in a previous Parliament because we recognized that far too often the justice system fails to respect the experiences of victims of sexual assault.

Passing this legislation was also part of the Conservative platform in the last election and was one of the platform points I was glad to see included. I am looking forward to the bill being debated. I will take the next few minutes to speak about this legislation, which will ensure survivors of sexual assault are treated with dignity during the judicial process.

In the end this legislation is about bringing forth trust. The just act would require judges to continue their education on matters related to sexual assault law and social context. Sexual assault survivors need to know that those hearing their cases have the training, background and context to give them a fair trial. To better ensure that sexual assault survivors do not hesitate to come forward, we need a judicial system that they can trust will be fair.

We also need a system which understands the laws of consent. With that considered, it is easy to support the bill. This legislation, if passed, would also require judges to provide reasons for their decisions in sexual assault cases. This is another important step in the right direction that will provide more clarity in the process. Requiring the rationale for these decisions will provide documentation in these cases, including an understanding of the thought process of a judge.

I remember many years ago I took training at the Justice Institute of British Columbia in Vancouver for a regulatory tribunal I was appointed for. The training involved how to articulate in writing the thought processes that brought me to my decision. When I previ-

ously heard about this bill, I was surprised that this process did not exist when judges had to provide reasons for their decisions in sexual assault cases.

Having judges be clear on the factors that led to their decision-making and discuss each component of that factor on cases of sexual assault increases transparency, which is important for our courts and for victims. This may lead to more well-thought-out decisions as well. We hear of situations where the justice system fails to respect the experiences of victims of sexual assault. The reality is that presently there are evident gaps in the current process. These gaps have resulted in sexual assault survivors seeing the justice system fail to respect the experiences of victims of sexual assault.

Some sexual assault survivors have said that they have lost faith in the judicial process completely. It was not too long ago that victims, especially women, were blamed for sexual assault. Before laws were put in place improving the process, it was common for judges to factor in things such as the length of a woman's skirt or whether she had had a past relationship with the perpetrator when determining if something was deemed to be criminal.

We may now look back on those days with disbelief that it ever happened, but we are far from having all the tools to ensure our judiciary, which is trained to look at sexual assault cases, is at the best of its ability. In fact, we hear too often the stories of this still happening in 2020, both in Canada and across the world. I am sure many of us have examples of this.

We have heard of victim blaming and of stereotypes. It is wrong and yet somehow it still happens. One story that continues to stick in my memory is when a judge, during court proceedings, asked a victim of sexual assault why she could not just keep her knees together. Comments such this are shocking. They show where there are gaps in the process of training the judiciary when it comes to sexual assault.

According to statistics from Canada's Department of Justice, 83% of sexual assaults were not reported to the police. This means that four in every five sexual assaults that occur are not filed with the police, let alone given a chance to go to trial and potentially lead to a conviction.

• (1055)

This figure is shocking and raises important questions about why the reported four in five victims of sexual assault feel that they cannot report what has happened. Is it because they feel they will be victim-blamed? Is it because they feel they will not be believed? Is it because they feel there may be a lack of evidence? Is it because they feel embarrassed? Maybe it is because they have heard of other cases where sexual assault was not taken seriously. Unfortunately, I know of a woman who chose not to report an incident that happened to her.

In further studies by the Department of Justice on this issue, victims of sexual assault were asked to rate their level of confidence in the police, the court processes and the criminal justice system in general. Few participants stated that they were very confident.

Bill C-3 would make an improvement in this trust factor on the judicial side of this process. Sexual assault victims would be better safeguarded and know that the judge in their case has up-to-date training in sexual assault law and understands the modern context of situations that can arise. This is important. If this bill would even slightly increase the confidence of sexual assault victims to bring come forward and report their situation to the police, then it is common sense that we should pass it.

Other important factors from the Department of Justice that stood out to me are that women between the ages of 15 and 24 have the highest rate of being a victim of sexual assault, and that self-reported sexual assault incidents very often involve an offender who is known to the victim, disproportionately more than other crimes such as physical assaults and robberies.

Young women need to know that the judicial system is fair and that they can trust it, even when it comes to reporting someone who is known to them. What message does it send to a young woman who is a sexual assault survivor who feels the judicial system did not give her a fulsome trial? The criminal justice system must work toward eradicating stereotyping and biases.

When it comes to supporting sexual assault survivors, this House must do all it can to improve the process. We must ensure that those who go through this have a fair and impartial process. Any legislation that would do this is something that should be enacted.

In my constituency, I sat with a woman in a coffee shop while she explained in detail her assault experience. I did not know what to say. The only thing that came out was, “I am so sorry that happened to you.”

My team and I have received emails and calls from those in Kelowna—Lake Country about the just act, as well as about improving the process for sexual assault victims. I have also had many conversations with those in Kelowna and Lake Country on their experiences with the process locally and how they believe it can be improved for sexual assault cases. We know that the Okanagan is not immune to this problem, and the just act comes up as one piece to address this issue.

I am looking forward to Bill C-3 moving to the next stage in the legislative process. This is an important bill for sexual assault sur-

vivors. I hope members in this House will support it when it comes to a vote.

• (1100)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country will have five minutes for questions and comments when the House gets back to debate on this question.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

CANADA SUMMER JOBS

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this summer, Brome—Missisquoi was fortunate to be able to take advantage of the Canada summer jobs program. Our organizations were able to share more than \$650,000 in subsidies, which was a boon to our local economy.

This program provided real support to our employers, which were already going through tough times. Many of them would not have been able to hire new employees without this help from our government. In total, 166 young people found a job this summer and obtained rewarding work experience. I would like to congratulate them on the work they accomplished even though we were in the midst of a pandemic.

I would also like to point out the contribution of this program to Camp Garagona in Frelighsburg, a camp for people with intellectual disabilities. Through the Canada summer jobs program, the camp was able to hire five additional counsellors, which really made a difference.

In closing, I would like to sincerely thank all the employers who participated in the program this year. Our government will always be there for our SMEs and organizations in Brome—Missisquoi.

* * *

[*English*]

DEFACING OF POLICE MONUMENT

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month, the statue of the late Constable Ezio Faraone of the Edmonton Police was desecrated with graffiti.

On June 25, 1990, Ezio Faraone was courageously pursuing two bank robbers when he was shot and killed. He died at the young age of 33, and to this day he is remembered as a man of honour. Ezio Faraone was murdered for doing nothing more than his job. He put his life on the line to keep our community safe, and he paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Sadly, this is not an isolated incident, but part of a trend. Acts of vandalism against the monuments to those who have given their lives to protect our communities must be condemned unequivocally, and perpetrators of such vile acts must be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

*Statements by Members***BELARUS**

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all Canadians, including Belarusian Canadians, I thank our government for condemning the fraudulent elections in Belarus and for imposing tough sanctions. Canada stands in solidarity with the people in Belarus.

I would like to recognize Nepean residents Dr. Piotra Murzionak, president of the Ottawa Chapter of the Belarusian Canadian Alliance, and Siarhei Mazgavoi for their hard work in highlighting the devastating actions of the dictatorships in Belarus.

For many years, Belarusian Canadians from all across Canada have fought for justice and human rights in Belarus, and have organized several events on Parliament Hill.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq (Nunavut, NDP): Mr. Speaker, housing in Nunavut and across the North is in a crisis state.

I recently did a housing tour in the Kivalliq and Kitikmeot regions, and what I saw was inhumane. Lack of adequate housing and safe spaces result in death. Inuit are dying. I saw homes where babies and young children were living that were overcrowded and mould-ridden, and that had not been renovated in years.

The Nunavut Housing Corporation is severely underfunded by the federal government. The federal government has a responsibility to fund housing in an adequate way, with appropriate materials for the North. Adequate housing is the least this government can do after years of neglect, oppression and colonization.

I will be presenting a report on what I saw in the coming weeks, and I expect the federal government to act on it now. Inuit and Nunavummiut cannot wait any longer.

* * *

*[Translation]***SCHOOL IN PIERREFONDS—DOLLARD**

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I had the pleasure of visiting children and teachers at Collège Beaubois, an elementary school and high school in my riding.

The day I visited, I planted a tree with the students and the principal, Éric Rivard. Mr. Rivard then signed A Pact for the Transition, which is a wonderful initiative to reduce our ecological footprint.

Collège Beaubois already supports neighbouring communities, especially the most disadvantaged communities, and it is now committed to reducing its ecological footprint by adopting a number of measures, such as promoting educational content that is focused on the environment, environmental responsibility and eco-citizenship; adopting sustainable development practices in the management of its building; and joining forces with partners in the community to share solutions to address the climate crisis.

On behalf of the people of Pierrefonds—Dollard, I want to congratulate—

● (1105)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: We have passed the one-minute mark.

The hon. member for Steveston—Richmond East.

* * *

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the opposition leader is correct in saying “the importance of respecting the rights of my fellow citizens was paramount” and that we as parliamentarians secure the rights of every Canadian, including the LGBT+ community.

I too will be clear. Harmful and coercive conversion therapy that seeks to demean and denigrate people for who are they are is reprehensible, is wrong and must be banned.

In March 2020, the government introduced Bill C-8 to ban the practice. However, the definition in Bill C-8 was so poorly worded, so unsound, that any rational individual would recognize it as an empty virtual signal.

Yesterday, instead of listening to feedback on how to improve the bill's sloppy wording, the government chose to reintroduce it verbatim as Bill C-6.

Ending conversion therapy must be done responsibly, with the spirit of compassion, wholeheartedly in good faith rather than cynically giving token recognition to a community asking for help.

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*[Translation]***LATIN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH**

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October has been celebrated as Latin American Heritage Month in Canada since 2018.

More than 400,000 people of Latin American heritage contribute to the social, cultural, economic and political fabric of this country. On that note, I want to honour the dedication of certain MPs from various parties who have served in this House, including my compatriots Osvaldo Nunez, Paulina Ayala and of course, my colleague, the hon. Pablo Rodriguez.

I am Chilean, the daughter of a valiant, resilient people that takes pride in our ancestors. For over 20 years, our freedom was taken away. Children, women, men, members of my family, and artists and journalists were tortured, arrested, kidnapped or murdered, including Victor Jara, one of Chile's greatest poets and singers.

[Member spoke in Spanish]

Statements by Members

[English]

FIRST TRANS-CANADA FLIGHT

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 100th anniversary of the first trans-Canada flight, a significant achievement by members of the Canadian Air Board, a department of the Dominion of Canada established in 1919 to oversee the development of aviation in Canada following the First World War.

On October 7, 1920, a seaplane departed Canadian Air Board Station Dartmouth, now the location of the Royal Canadian Air Force's 12 Wing Shearwater. The aircraft was bound for Vancouver, nearly 5,400 kilometres away, an incredible feat through the successful completion of the first trans-continental crossing of Canada by air.

The air board brought aviation to the attention of the Canadian public, so much so that former Governor General Vincent Massey said, "The aircraft came to Canada as a godsend...It probably has meant more to us than it has to any other country."

This historic event brought two Canadian coasts together and deserves our recognition.

* * *

TOWN OF INNISFIL

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 200th anniversary of the town of Innisfil. Yes, Innisfil is older than the Dominion of Canada.

The story of Innisfil began in 1820 with the official survey that laid out the boundaries and concessions. The first settlers were the Hewson and Soules families that arrived by way of the East Holland River and beautiful Lake Simcoe to settle at what is now Big Bay Point.

It was not long before John and George Warnica's efforts cleared the way for Yonge Street and Highway 11 to be built through Innisfil, an important route connecting York and Barrie that was completed in 1825.

The earliest official recorded census shows that by 1842 the population of Innisfil was 762. Today, Innisfil is a growing, inclusive, vibrant and innovative town of distinct communities with a population of over 36,000.

Although the anniversary celebrations have not happened as planned because of COVID, I wish Mayor Lynn Dollin, council and all the residents of the town of Innisfil a very happy 200th anniversary.

* * *

● (1110)

OPIOIDS

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic is the public health crisis of our generation. However, there is another crisis that is killing Canadians at an alarming rate, the opioid crisis. Opioid overdoses are now responsible for more deaths in the country each month than COVID-19.

Our government's approach to opioids has been consistent since 2015. Substance use and addictions are health care problems, not criminal ones. The solution to these problems lies in a stronger public health approach, not in tougher criminal sanctions. That starts with harm reduction.

When we learned that the vast number of overdose deaths were linked to the presence of fentanyl in the illegal supply of opioids, we took action. Our government is investing \$9.5 million to ensure the safe supply of opioids. This approach, coupled with supports and treatments for substance use addiction, will help save lives and improve public health.

Of this funding, \$582,000 is being delivered to my riding to the Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre. This will enable Angela Robertson and her dedicated team to continue the critical harm reduction work and continue to save lives in our community.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 24, the former finance minister told Albertans that help for our hurting oil and gas sector was "hours, possibly days" away. That was around 190 days ago, and still nothing.

Albertans watched last week's throne speech anxiously awaiting a plan, any kind of plan, but still nothing. In fact, Canada's resource economy was not mentioned at all. We are a patient bunch, but when we have to wait half a year, it shows negligence.

Should Albertans just take the Prime Minister at his word about phasing out the industry? The only thing the Liberal government is saying is that Alberta's oil and gas sector is closed for business. It is saying goodbye to all the revenues it generates for our hospitals and schools, and all the families that depend on those jobs.

It is a bleak time in Alberta and people are looking for hope, something the government is not offering.

* * *

COVID-19

Mr. Bob Benzen (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ranchman's Cookhouse and Dancehall was an iconic business in my riding that built up a loyal following over nearly 50 years. It was also home for rodeo history, with hundreds of pieces of memorabilia loaned over the years by champion ropers and riders, yet even its unique profile could not save Ranchman's from the economic ravages of the COVID lockdown.

Statements by Members

Solvent and profitable businesses like Ranchman's and others across Calgary, Alberta and Canada have disappeared or are struggling to survive commerce-killing, government-imposed restrictions. The negative impacts of job losses and isolation on individuals are having a detrimental effect on society as a whole.

The response to ongoing public health challenges cannot always be just more economic shutdowns that businesses have no capacity to endure. Will the Prime Minister finally present a realistic plan that balances keeping Canadians safe with protecting their jobs?

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the climate crisis and growth of inequality represent the pre-eminent environmental and social challenges of our time. Our planet faces catastrophic impacts if we do not take strong and urgent action to reduce carbon emissions. The unjustifiable concentration of wealth in the hands of so few while so many are struggling threatens the stability of our society and challenges the morality of our nation.

The COVID crisis presents us with a unique opportunity to hasten the transition to a sustainable and just economy. It is time to implement innovative policies like a universal basic income, a full-employment strategy, a nature-first lens and adopt measures of growth that capture true well-being.

At their core is the recognition that all people matter and we have one planet, whose well-being is our responsibility to steward for all generations to come. By aligning recovery measures with environmental and social justice priorities, we can set Canada on a course to a truly sustainable future.

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[*Translation*]

MONTREAL EAST/POINTE-AUX-TREMBLES WOMEN'S CENTRE

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Centre des femmes de Montréal-Est/Pointe-aux-Trembles, which works to pull women out of social isolation, help them stand up for their rights, and support their socio-economic integration.

The Centre des femmes de Montréal-Est/Pointe-aux-Trembles is a pillar of our community that has been present in La Pointe-de-l'Île since 1975. It offers educational, facilitation, support and listening services to empower women from all walks of life and backgrounds to take control of their own destiny.

I also want to extend my thanks and appreciation to the founder, Gisèle Pomerleau, the director, Dorette Mekamdjio, the chair, Danielle Roy, and the whole team for the invaluable work they do. This is a caring, engaged, dedicated, dynamic team that is always there for women in Montreal East and Pointe-aux-Trembles.

Happy 25th anniversary to the Centre des femmes de Montréal-Est/Pointe-aux-Trembles.

• (1115)

[*English*]

HOUSING

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 lockdown and sanctions have left hundreds of thousands of Canadians without a job. Many homeowners affected had to ask themselves how they would pay their mortgages without a job. In an expensive housing market like the GTA, it is almost impossible. Mortgage deferrals helped, but came to an end this week. I have already received calls from concerned people across the GTA.

The threat of thousands of people losing their homes should be top of mind for the Liberal government. The throne speech could have addressed these concerns. Instead of any action or a plan, there was silence. The word “mortgage” did not make it into the speech at all. I hope the government will address this huge oversight.

* * *

SISTERS IN SPIRIT

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 4, we honour the lives of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, two-spirited and gender diverse people. We support survivors and families and we recommit to concrete change to end the violence and to protect future generations.

On this day, and every day, our hearts are with the survivors and the families. Our government is working with all partners to develop a national action plan that sets a clear road map to ensure that indigenous women and girls, two-spirit and gender diverse people are safe.

Due to the pandemic, how we participate in this is critically important today and will change this year. I urge everyone, all parliamentarians and all Canadians, to take time on Sunday to acknowledge and reflect on what every Canadian can do to end this unacceptable situation for indigenous Canadians. Whether it is through outdoor and socially distancing events or online virtual vigils, I encourage everyone to participate.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I join with the leader of the official opposition and the Prime Minister in wishing the President of the United States and the First Lady a speedy recovery from COVID-19.

This situation serves as a reminder that rapid testing exists in the U.S. People in Canada are too often made to wait a very long time. The government announced that a rapid test has just been approved. That is great, but it was long overdue, as that test was approved in the U.S. six months ago.

Why did the government drag its feet?

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 7.9 million tests were ordered from Abbott and 2.5 million are arriving in the next few weeks, as late as December 31. We are working day and night to get these tests approved. Over 7.4 million Canadians have already been tested for COVID-19.

We are seeing a fall resurgence. We must continue to increase laboratory capacity and the number of tests done per day. We will continue to work with provinces and territories to ensure that we can do a high number of tests per day, but also have the resources to do rapid contact tracing and treatment of new cases.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the late 1990s, Canada created something that was very important and quite interesting, namely the Global Public Health Intelligence Network, which was mandated to help fight any pandemics that might emerge. It worked well in the fight against SARS and H1N1, for example. In 2018, however, the Liberal government decided to change that organization's role. The upshot is that rather than relying on Canadian scientists, the Liberal government is relying on the WHO.

Why did the government do that? This was very costly to Canada in terms of time lost.

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were concerned with reports that GPHIN analysts were not able to proceed with their very important work. We will be conducting an independent review of these changes to make sure that this vital tool continues to inform decisions to protect Canadians.

From the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Global Public Health Intelligence Network has been a very important source of public health intelligence.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the problem. This vital tool, as the parliamentary sec-

Oral Questions

retary said, has changed his mind. The decision was made by the Liberal government, and now we have to pay a huge price.

Does this mean that the government was so incompetent that it could not recognize its own responsibility on this issue?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we trust and value science and evidence. We know the importance of public health intelligence in identifying outbreaks. As I have said, we are concerned about the reports from GPHIN analysts that they were unable to proceed with their important work.

We have asked for the independent review, and we look forward to their findings.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week the Liberal government has used in their talking points, over and over again, the need to quote scientists.

Let me quote the government's top scientist to the member across. Dr. Supriya Sharma said that only "hundreds of thousands" of tests would be arriving up until the end of this year. To put that into context, close to 300,000 tests were done in Ontario alone this week.

I would like to give the member the opportunity to correct the record, because I believe he just misled the House and the Canadian people. We are not seeing tests until early 2021.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed we did order 7.9 million rapid tests from Abbott. The first tests will start to arrive in the next few weeks, with 2.5 million arriving by December 31, 2020. Then they will continue to arrive into 2021.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is the reality. There is such a big backlog in Ontario and Quebec for testing that the Prime Minister is telling people that they are going to have to miss Thanksgiving dinner and that they are not going to be able to visit their elderly parents in long-term care facilities. All this could be corrected if we had the ability to test frequently and get results within 15 minutes, which is what everyone else in the world has.

The member misled the House. He said these tests were going to be available now. We know from reports today that is not happening until 2021.

How many more people have to die because of their incompetence?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning, we have worked very closely with provinces and territories. Our safe restart agreement provided \$4 billion for provinces and territories to increase testing capacity and contact tracing, with more than \$1 billion going to Ontario alone. We were pleased to see Ontario update its testing requirements.

Oral Questions

We will continue working closely with all levels of government. Again, 7.9 million rapid tests are on their way, starting in the coming weeks.

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[Translation]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec is in the midst of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The restaurant and bar industry is in jeopardy. Bars and restaurants are SMEs that managed to hold on during the first lockdown, but today thousands of them are at risk of going bankrupt. Yesterday, Quebec announced that it would help with fixed costs for businesses in red zones that have to close their doors. Quebec is contributing. Now it is the federal government's turn. Quebec is asking the federal government to participate by sharing the cost of the program and enhancing it.

Will the federal government do its part and help Quebec with this program?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Bloc Québécois promised to trigger an election now, if possible, or else later this spring. If it could, the Bloc Québécois would like us to have an election this weekend.

While the Bloc Québécois is focusing on an election, we are focusing on the health of Quebeckers. There are over 1,000 cases today and seven deaths, and the Bloc Québécois's priority is to trigger an election.

Really?

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I heard nothing about assistance for SMEs, but I will continue.

There is one thing we should not forget: taking out loans means going into debt, and that is no longer an option. The government twice promised to help businesses affected by COVID-19, such as restaurants and bars. The first time, at the request of the Bloc Québécois, it promised to provide assistance for fixed costs, as a result of a motion passed on April 11. Need we remind the government that in the throne speech it also promised to support businesses that must close when ordered to do so by public health authorities?

Will the government keep its promise and help support businesses by providing assistance for fixed costs that will not be in the form of a loan?

• (1125)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Bloc Québécois announced that it had lost confidence in the government and would therefore be voting against the government's economic measures.

If we introduce economic measures to help seniors, the Bloc will vote against them. If we introduce economic measures to help

workers, it will vote against them. If we introduce economic measures to help our SMEs, it will vote against them.

The Bloc Québécois has abandoned Quebeckers. We will never abandon them.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has hit Canadian families hard and they are struggling, but Canada's billionaires have seen their wealth skyrocket outrageously during this period, by more than \$37 billion. We need resources to help people. Many other countries have put in place taxes on wealth, and over two-thirds of Canadian families support that necessity.

Why does the government refuse to put in place a wealth tax on Canada's billionaires? Why will they not force Canada's billionaires to pay their fair share?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we absolutely believe that everyone in Canada needs to pay their fair share, all the more so as we are fighting together against a global pandemic. That is why in the throne speech we committed to working to identify additional ways to tax extreme wealth inequality, including by concluding our work to limit the stock option deduction for wealthy individuals at large established corporations, and of course taxing the global digital giants.

* * *

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have ended the freeze on student loan payments, but they never helped international students or graduate students. They cut almost 40% from the help low-income students got, and there is still the almost \$1 billion in supports they promised through CSSG but buried under their WE scandal. Now, with a second wave of COVID and poor job prospects, the Liberals are forcing students to figure out how to make their loan payments again.

Will the Liberals commit to long-term help and, at the very least, permanently remove interest on student debt?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not often enough we talk about Canada's student loans. I recall that when I graduated from university, I came out of university with not only debt, but also accrued interest, which does not put our students in a position to succeed.

That is exactly why in budget 2019, at page 44, members will see that for Canada student loans, we are putting forward a plan to not only make them interest-free, but make sure the six-month period is payment-free and interest-free. That is in direct response to what students are saying. It is also why, in the response to COVID-19, one of the first things we did was freeze interest and put a moratorium on payments.

We will continue working with students and youth.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Public Services and Procurement said, “we revealed on our website at the end of July all of our contracts and suppliers”, yet I have a document in my hand that says otherwise. In September, the minister’s own departmental staff sent an email to a business in my riding that inquired about the status of a contract they had submitted a bid for. The email clearly states, “Due to the National Security Exemption...invoked on this procurement...contract award information will not be posted online”.

Both of these things cannot be true, so which is it?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, on July 31, as the minister said yesterday, we disclosed supplier names and contract values for contracts that Canada has entered into for PPE and medical equipment, except certain commodities that have proven difficult to obtain and where additional procurements may be needed; hence, the national security exemption.

While we are not able to disclose all details regarding suppliers and contracts at this time, we intend to provide more information at a time when the current level of risk has passed, and obviously with the constant motivation of keeping Canadians and our health professionals safe.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are other groups, including the Canadian Medical Association, that are very concerned. They are asking questions because they are still having a hard time getting protection equipment. Members of the Canadian Medical Association and experts have been sounding the alarm for the past seven months. Fifty-four per cent of their members are still having difficulty getting equipment and 86% of members are quite worried.

If the Prime Minister has a distribution plan, could he share it with us now?

• (1130)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the government is focusing all of its efforts on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are co-operating with our partners at every level of government and with the private sector in order to obtain the necessary medical supplies. We are very confident, as we head into fall, that the efforts of the past six months will pay off. We have put in place

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additional supply chains with the various suppliers, including Canadian suppliers, and we continue to appeal to Canadian businesses to quickly increase and retool their production capacity.

[English]

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is needlessly using national security rules to hide which Canadian companies are being awarded contracts for PPE. Why can we not know how much we are paying for disposable masks? Why can we not know which Canadian companies are supplying them? This does not seem like a national security issue for the government. It seems more likely to be an ethical insecurity issue for the Liberals.

Why will the Liberals not tell us who is getting what and for how much?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, transparency and accountability are critically important to our government, and we are committed to releasing a full account of all our procurement efforts. We will absolutely do that for Canadians.

For supplies that are in critical shortage worldwide, where we are actually competing with other jurisdictions for critical procurements, I do not know if the hon. member is suggesting that Canada should make public that critical information. We will not be doing that. What we will be doing is strategically procuring the medical equipment and the PPE required for Canadians and our health professionals to keep us safe.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, who is on the ground? It is doctors and front-line workers.

The president of the CMA, Dr. Collins, said that masks, surgical gowns, gloves and face shields were necessary for every visit. They have no choice. It was already a problem in August, even before the current spike in cases and requests for COVID-19 tests, and the re-opening of schools. There is a problem and even community doctors are quite concerned. We would like more transparency, more clarity.

What is the current plan to protect Canadians?

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Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working on it. As we enter into fall, we are sure that our efforts over the past six months to strengthen our capacity to procure personal protective equipment and medical equipment will continue to pay off for Canadians.

I do not know if the hon. member opposite is rooting for failure on this. I can assure you that those responsible for procurement, those at Health Canada, as well as the inspectors and those in charge of regulation are also our guardian angels and protect us. We thank them for it.

We are confident.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second wave of COVID-19 has begun. I would like the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to assure me that the PPE procurement process has been fixed.

My riding is home to a company that has been accredited by Health Canada for 20 years. It supposedly got lost in the system during the first wave.

Could the minister give me a relevant answer and assure me that the Liberals' buddies will not get preferential treatment?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working very hard to ensure continuity of supply for health professionals and for all Canadians.

We have started an additional supply chain involving various suppliers. We are calling on anyone who believes they could help us out by supplying equipment or services to the Government of Canada to get in touch. We will continue to be vigilant in building Canada's equipment capacity.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): This is rather odd, Mr. Speaker. Red Deer—Lacombe is a Conservative riding and businesses in the region do not have any contracts. Local businesses in Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, which is also a Conservative riding, do not have any contracts. However, Frank Baylis, a Liberal, received \$237 million.

Is there a tendency to give contracts to the Liberals' friends, yes or no?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry delivered the good news that more than 50% of our supply chain is located in Canada.

[English]

We can thank Fluid Energy from Calgary for supplying us with hand sanitizer. We can thank enterprises like LuminUltra in New Brunswick for providing us with reagent. We can thank businesses from all over the country that are heeding the call to action and coming to the rescue of Canadians and our health care professionals. Conservatives should be ashamed.

• (1135)

[Translation]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government House leader just demonstrated a major lack of respect for my colleague from Saint-Jean, but particularly for Quebec restaurants and bars that are in red zones and at risk of going bankrupt.

Even if he regards us with contempt, can the leader answer our questions out of respect for the businesses that have had to shut down for another month and are at risk of going bankrupt?

Quebec has asked the federal government to join its program, share the cost and enhance it. Will the government do that?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are moments in history where we recognize the leadership of a party by the way it reacts in a time of crisis. The Bloc Québécois failed that test yesterday by saying that it was going to ensure that our government does not make it past the spring of 2021.

What will happen if cases go up in 2021? What will happen if thousands of Quebecers are still looking for work? Will the Bloc Québécois's priority be to trigger an election?

The Bloc Québécois promised to maintain a responsible position. This is very disappointing.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am speechless.

A government stands when it has the confidence of the House. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is not answering legitimate questions. It should answer those questions, if only out of respect for the bars, restaurants and businesses that are in jeopardy.

These are serious issues, but he wants to play political games. We know the government is planning to announce loans for these businesses. The government needs to step up with programs that meet Quebec's needs. It has to adapt the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance for small businesses. The criteria are overly restrictive.

I am going to ask this question for the fourth time, just like my colleague from Saint-Jean did. What is the government going to do? Does it care about businesses?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I said it earlier. The Bloc Québécois is busy planning its election campaign. Meanwhile, we are busy working for businesses, for seniors, for workers who have lost their jobs, and for the restaurant and tourism sector. That is what taking concrete action means.

The Bloc Québécois can go ahead and plan its campaign. It can focus on that as much as it wants while we step up for Quebecers.

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second wave of coronavirus is turning into a tsunami because the Prime Minister has failed to get Canadians rapid testing. This is insane, because the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health actually has a rapid testing company in his own constituency in Dartmouth. This is crazy.

Either the Prime Minister wants the economy to completely shut down and people to miss family dinners, or he is just blindly incompetent. These tests are not coming because of Liberal failures. Which one is it?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, as I have said, we have been at the table with our provincial and territorial counterparts to help them respond to COVID-19. We have been very clear with every jurisdiction that testing, contact tracing and timely data are key to responding to outbreaks.

Not only have we provided billions of dollars through our safe restart program to increase capacity of testing, but we have also ordered 7.9 million Abbott tests, rapid tests, that will begin arriving in the next few weeks, with 2.5 million of these tests here by December 31.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is months away. This guy has a rapid testing company in his own backyard and did not even think to raise it with the minister months ago. I will tell members who this impacts: the elderly. What the Prime Minister is doing with this is saying that long-term care facilities have to be locked down, and aging and elderly people have to stay in their homes. That is the only tool we have because we cannot frequently and rapidly test each other.

Why has the Prime Minister allowed becoming elderly or being aged to become a prison sentence in Canada?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as an integral part of our plan to safely restart our economy, we are securing the testing supplies, including as my colleague said up to approximately eight million tests from Abbott ID NOW to meet our needs now and for the long term and increase our capacity to test more Canadians.

What I am perplexed about is this. We have spent six months procuring the equipment we need and we are confident about that. We have spent six months building our domestic capacity. We have spent six months assisting and standing side by side with our provinces. What is it about yes, yes and yes does the opposition over there not get?

* * *

• (1140)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Charie Santiago is dying of stage four cancer. Her dying wish is to be reunited with her sister, her best friend, and for her to be by her side in her final moments. However, her sister is in the Philippines

Oral Questions

and has been denied entry into Canada by the Liberal government. Surely, there is a way we can ensure Charie and her sister are reunited safely. Canadians are tired of the talk and endless promises of details to come. They want answers and they want them now.

Where is the compassion? Where is the plan?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we introduced a process to reunite families last June, we have been working on ways to address additional families and compassionate cases. I know it has been a long and challenging wait, but we are working very closely with health and border agencies and across federal and provincial governments to find solutions.

Cases like the one my hon. colleague just mentioned are inspiring our work and we hope to have more to say very shortly.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think “inspiring” is absolutely the wrong word to use. The Liberals have been announcing reuniting families for months and still nothing. Canadians deserve the dignity and clarity of timelines, rather than “more details coming soon”.

Donna McCall was dying of cancer and her children were denied entry into Canada. As she took her last breath, her husband held her hand, and in his other hand, had his children on FaceTime on his iPhone. This is not the Canada I know. The Liberals have allowed billionaires on private jets into this country, but will not allow people who are dying to be reunited with their loved ones one last time. That is unacceptable.

Where is the plan?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if my hon. colleague was listening, what I said was that cases like the one she had mentioned were inspiring us to continue to reunite as many families as possible. On this side of the House we believe in compassion, but we have to exercise that compassion responsibly. We will always stand up for families when it comes to our immigration system, while not compromising the health and safety of Canadians during the pandemic.

*Oral Questions***FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this year was the worst run for Fraser River sockeye in recorded history. The minister cannot both promote open net salmon farms and claim to be a protector of Pacific wild salmon. Open net-pen farms increase the risk of disease and sea lice in wild salmon. By choosing to defend these farms, the minister is ignoring not only local and indigenous knowledge but also the Cohen commission report, a \$36-million scientific study.

When will the Liberals make good on their promise and remove the promotion of open net fish farms from the Department of Fisheries' mandate?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, wild Pacific salmon is a priority for our government, to British Columbians and to all Canadians, so I want to be very clear. Our government is committed to transitioning away from open net-pen finfish aquaculture in British Columbia in a responsible way. Part of that responsibility is to consult meaningfully with affected first nations, and that is exactly what our government is doing.

We also need to work with the Province of British Columbia as we know all parties want to see a plan that is timely, workable and economically feasible. We are doing that work.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear that the government will support regional airline routes that are essential for ridings like mine. We know airlines are going through a tough time, but I want assurance that any direct support also requires that the airlines provide refunds for travellers who have been given only vouchers in return for cancelled flights. Every MP has heard from travellers who now have vouchers for thousands of dollars that they may never be able to use.

The minister passed a law that clearly states passengers must be compensated in cash. While supporting airlines, will he also support everyday Canadians?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard from all of our constituents across the country about the concerns that they face. No Canadian should have to choose between paying for rent and having income insecurity as a result of being unable to receive refunds. The minister's office continues to work with airlines across the country to ensure a solution. We will continue to work with them and hope to have more information in the coming weeks and months.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, can the minister update the House and fisheries stakeholders in British Columbia on the minister's response to recommendations 18, 19 and 20 in the Cohen Commission of Inquiry into the decline of sockeye salmon in the Fraser River?

This called for an evaluation of the risk to wild Fraser River salmon posed by aquaculture operations in the Discovery Islands and a decision by September 30, 2020, on whether they should continue operations in that area.

• (1145)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his work on the fisheries committee and specifically for his recent work on wild Pacific salmon, a subject that we both share a passion for.

I want to be very clear. Our government is committed to transitioning away from open net-pen finfish aquaculture in British Columbia in a responsible way. Part of that responsibility is to consult meaningfully with affected first nations, and that is exactly what we are taking the time to do.

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[Translation]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 108 workers at Princecraft in Princeville, 30 workers at Fournier Industries in Thetford Mines, and 16 workers at Plessitech in Plessisville have lost half of their pay since May because of a computer glitch between the CERB and the federal government's work-sharing program. Despite my repeated requests to the minister's office, these families are still without that money nearly five months later; #PhotoOp, but also #Incompetence.

When will those workers start getting their full salary to provide for their families?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is doing everything it can to help our workers, to help people who have lost their jobs. We began with the CERB, an historic program that helped millions of people. Now we are transitioning that program to EI to make sure no one is left behind, to make sure we are there for everyone in need. We will continue to do so.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are talking about how they want to transition, but they have not even managed to complete the transition that should have been done five months ago.

How are people supposed to pay their bills with just half of what they normally earn?

I am talking about 154 people who trusted the government's measures, who returned to work instead of continuing to receive CERB, and who have now been working for five months making just half of what they used to. It took much less time for the Liberal government to find a way to help its friends at WE Charity.

When will these honest workers get paid?

[*English*]

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the urgency of the situation and that is why our government has taken action to support workers and their families.

In August, we announced the next steps in our government's plan to support Canadians through this pandemic. Our plan includes a seamless transition to EI coupled with the creation of new benefits to ensure that no Canadian worker is left behind. Last week, we introduced legislation to create these benefits.

Our goal during this transition from emergency to recovery is to provide Canadian workers with certainty and comfort they can count on over the long term. No matter what stage or phase of recovery communities are in, we will leave no worker behind.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's plan to get rural Canadians connected by 2030 is a slap in the face to the regions.

The pandemic has made Internet access an urgent priority. We must support small businesses across the country and ensure that young people can keep up with their studies. This is essential. The vitality of our regions depends on it.

When will the government get the CRTC to develop a real plan for high-speed Internet access and, most importantly, get telecommunications providers to contribute? This is urgent to rural areas across the country. I would like a date.

[*English*]

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I live in a rural area, and I really understand that Internet is no longer a luxury. It is essential.

In the last six months, many people have worked from home. They have done their classes from the kitchen table, visited their doctors online and accessed government services remotely, so it is important, more than ever, that all Canadians have access to the Internet.

As confirmed in the throne speech, we are going to accelerate the connectivity timelines and the wonderful ambitions of the universal broadband fund to ensure that all Canadians, no matter where they live, have access to high-speed Internet.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the rise of working and schooling from home due to

Oral Questions

COVID-19 in much of the country, access to strong, reliable Internet is more important now than ever. The quality of Internet service continues to rise in our urban centres, while places from Borden-Carleton to Fernwood and Malpeque, Prince Edward Island, are left behind. This is just another example of the Liberal government ignoring rural Canadians.

When will the Prime Minister listen to the concerns of rural Canada and ensure that all Canadians have access to quality broadband Internet?

• (1150)

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo my comments to my colleague across the way. I, too, understand the importance of connectivity and how we need to move forward.

I am delighted that we connected just over one million homes with our last program, and we are looking forward to the new universal broadband fund. We are excited with the partnerships that will avail themselves of it, in connecting rural and remote communities, and will leverage money. Of course, with the announcement made the other day on the Canadian Infrastructure Bank, which is a \$2 billion investment, to connect more than—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Jonquière.

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[*Translation*]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government House leader seems to be creating a narrative in which the Bloc Québécois wants an election and does not want to collaborate.

The cultural sector has been hit hard by the pandemic. The House leader should listen to what his colleague, the member for Malpeque, said this week. He told us that Canadian taxpayers could not be an ATM for Quebec. Whenever the cultural sector tries to access Canada's ATM, they get an "insufficient funds" message.

I do not want to hear talk of an election. I do not want to hear about collaboration. I have a simple question. Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage commit to making sure that Quebec's cultural sector gets access to immediate, direct assistance to pay rent and fixed costs?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the Minister of Canadian Heritage for his extraordinary work. Having had the privilege of once holding that job myself, I know how important culture is, so, yes, we will be there for the cultural industry.

Oral Questions

I would like to ask my Bloc Québécois friend a question. I have a lot of respect for many Bloc Québécois members. They do good work. However, since yesterday, they have been saying that they will never vote with the government again. If we implement a cultural program, will they vote against it like they plan to vote against everything else?

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I realize that the government House leader is bothered by the fact that the Bloc Québécois's sole loyalty is to Quebecers. I invite him to talk to us about elections outside the chamber. I would like an answer. Of course, given that the Bloc Québécois's sole loyalty is to Quebecers, we will vote in favour of everything brought before the House that is good for Quebec. We are making that clear from the outset.

Since the issue just came up, let us continue discussing culture. We are asking for a clear answer and we do not want the government to avoid the question by talking about other things. Our museums, movie houses and theatres are in a red zone and closed for 28 days. This means that their owners are in trouble. This means that artists are once again unable to practise their craft. Culture matters to the Bloc Québécois because it represents our identity—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is not Quebecers. Bloc members make that mistake a lot. The Bloc Québécois is just a political party with its own strengths and weaknesses. That is all. It is not all Quebecers. Bloc members do not speak on behalf of my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, of Liberal caucus members from Quebec, or of my colleague from Gatineau.

The Bloc Québécois is loyal to the Bloc Québécois, not to Quebecers, period. Its members have decided to stay in the stands and watch the game while we vote.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, former Liberal Dan McTeague recently released a study that revealed the Liberals' new fuel standards, dubbed carbon tax 2.0, would increase home heating costs by 60%, drive up the price of fuel by another 13¢, cost 30,000 jobs and remove \$22 billion from our economy.

For the Minister of Economic Development, why does her government continue to wage war on hard-working men and women in our energy sector, manufacturing sector and agriculture sectors across our country?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Western Economic Diversification Canada) and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (Canada Water Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has put in place an ambitious climate plan that is doing more to cut pollution than any other plan in Canada's history. We are also putting more money in Canadians' pockets. The clean fuel standard represents a massive opportunity

to create jobs, attract investment, drive innovation and ensure Canada is producing the things the world wants, well into the future. Canadians expect climate action now, and that is what we will deliver.

• (1155)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this has nothing to do with climate action, and I have figured out what the Liberals' actual priorities are. Today, they posted a job for \$90,000 for a storyteller and team lead in the PMO.

In the middle of the pandemic, is that your priority? You want a storyteller to tell stories about the Prime Minister. It is shameful. When thousands of people in Saskatchewan are looking for jobs for months and people are paying their mortgages with their lines of credit, your priority is a storyteller for your unserious, unethical Prime Minister. You should be ashamed of yourselves and get a real plan for jobs in our country.

The Deputy Speaker: I just remind the hon. member to direct his questions to the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Western Economic Diversification Canada) and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (Canada Water Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all we hear from the Conservatives is what they are against. They are against putting a price on pollution. They are against having cleaner fuels. They are against having a real climate plan. We know we have to take climate action now. Canadians know this. The world knows this. It seems the only people who do not are the Conservatives.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, the natural resources minister told CBC News that there is no path to net-zero carbon dioxide emissions without nuclear power. The minister gave every impression that the Liberals' throne speech would commit added research and development to small modular reactor technology, and this is also a priority for the New Brunswick government. However, the throne speech was totally silent on SMRs.

Does the government consider SMR to be part of the country's clean and affordable energy solution, or is this minister just out of the loop on national energy decisions?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly, small modular reactors have a wide range of potential applications, are emissions free and could be an option for communities that choose to use them. In 2018, a steering committee including provinces, territories and power utilities submitted the SMR road map. To date, we have seen a clear interest and initial action taken to advance this technology in a safe and responsible way.

The safety of Canadians and protection of our environment remain top priorities for both our government and our industry regulator, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. We have more to say about this, and we are very excited about the possibilities that the SMR sector is presenting to Canadians.

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[Translation]

DIGITAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has upended many aspects of our lives.

Our government is making sure that no one has to face this pandemic alone. Our government has provided important benefits, such as the Canada emergency response benefit and the Canada emergency student benefit, at a time when the public service was making significant efforts to shift to telework.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Digital Government provide us with an update on how the government and the public service have adapted to provide these important services to Canadians?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for his hard work and his excellent question.

More than ever before, we now understand how important it is to have access to online services in times of crisis. We increased the capacity of these systems overnight in order to quickly meet the growing need for online services and the transition to working from home. We provided tools such as the Benefits Finder and the COVID Alert app. These tools were deployed within just a few weeks. Our public servants are amazing.

Our plan is to build on this momentum to provide better, faster and more reliable online services to improve the lives of Canadians.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been another summer where my constituents have not been able to utilize the Okanagan Rail Trail to its full capacity. A section of the trail is closed due to the fact that the federal government has delays in administering an addition to reserve. People, dangerously, have to divert onto a highway.

Oral Questions

This decommissioned CN Rail project is a model of co-operation between our local municipal governments and thousands of donors and volunteers. I wrote the indigenous services minister months ago, with no response. My constituents are getting frustrated. When will the minister resolve this land transfer?

● (1200)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to sit down with the member and brief her further on another occasion.

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SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, businesses across Canada are struggling in their recovery. I hear from many about CEBA: their frustration with applications, delays on changes that were promised long ago and long wait times. Even the MPs are being barred by officials from even asking for help. Especially when Liberals only seem to respond to our questions with condescension, that is not enough.

Could the minister tell us when we can expect this small business lifeline to be fixed?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would never be condescending to any member in the House, particularly to members talking about our small businesses.

I absolutely agree with the member opposite that now, at the time of the coronavirus crisis, they need our support. We committed in the throne speech to enhancing CEBA, and we are very hard at work on that. We will have more to say very soon.

We also committed to further support on fixed costs and to targeted support for businesses facing new lockdown measures. All of that will happen.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the York Regional Police have reported busting a multi-million dollar illegal casino run by organized crime in Markham. These types of operations fund the drug trade and human trafficking, and the dirty money they make is protected by brutal violence.

Liberal policies are soft on crime and hard on communities. These policies are failing the GTA. That is why organized crime is thriving.

Why will the Liberals not take organized crime seriously?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me be very clear that we take the threat of organized crime, transnational organized crime, money laundering and the activities that the member described very seriously.

I am a little perplexed by the member's assertion now, because when he and the Conservatives were in government, they cut resources to the RCMP. They closed all the integrated proceeds of crime units, and excellent police services like the York Regional Police service have always relied on well-funded support from the RCMP. That is why we have been working so hard to restore the capacity of the RCMP to participate fulsomely and to lead Canada in the fight against organized crime.

We will always stand resolutely to ensure that our officials have the resources they need.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries.

I sit in the unceded traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia. Each year on October 1, we celebrate Treaty Day to honour the peace and friendship treaties between Nova Scotia's original Mi'kmaq first nations and European settlers.

My constituents in Millbrook First Nation, as well as the Mi'kmaq across the province, would appreciate an update on the current nation-to-nation discussions under way between our government and the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs based on their treaty rights to fish for a moderate livelihood, which was upheld in a ruling on the Marshall decision—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries.

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for the excellent work she does in this place on behalf of her constituents. Yesterday was indeed Treaty Day, and it reminds us of the important work that still needs to be done in honouring the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed so many years ago.

Under the Marshall decision, first nations have a constitutionally protected right to fish in pursuit of a moderate livelihood, and implementing this decision is critical to the work of reconciliation and is a priority for our government. The minister continues to have conversations with first nations leadership, and will continue to work collaboratively to fully implement their treaty rights.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we are reminded that COVID-19 can hit anyone anywhere, even the President of the U.S.

We also know that first nations are disproportionately impacted. One of the biggest challenges for first nations is how people self-isolate when their houses are overcrowded during a housing crisis. Every day, indigenous people are forced to leave their community for essential services. For communities now in lockdown, like York Factory, people are stranded.

What actions is the government taking to ensure people can safely remain outside their community for their health and that of their first nation?

• (1205)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to update the member on the recent cluster of cases in York Factory. A rapid response team arrived in the community a few days ago. They are ensuring that community members who are affected are isolating, and we are tracking and testing cases. We are cautiously optimistic about the outcome and the safety of that community at this time.

Obviously we know indigenous communities face these barriers and will continue to face these barriers as a second wave hits. We will move aggressively to deploy surge capacity and ensure isolation, whether it is inside or outside the community, to avoid that important vector of transmission that can be caused with intercommunity travel.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place to raise an issue that I think has not been raised here before. It is that imminently the United States military plans to start bombing within the territory of our southern resident killer whales. It is called, very benignly, the U.S. Navy northwest training and testing activities, but it will include the use of torpedoes, bombs up to 1,000 pounds, explosives and testing underwater drones in our shared waters. The Liberal government has said nothing. The State of Washington has protested.

When will the government deliver a clear message to the U.S. Navy not to do this in our waters, and not to wipe out our southern resident killer whales?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to the protection of the marine environment and made significant investments over the past years to protect southern resident killer whales.

Canada's navy has always been a strong steward of the environment. It has taken action to cease training operations in the area until we can assess the situation. It also has procedures to limit training impact on wildlife and continues to work with the Department of Defence and our counterparts in the United States on this important issue.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sure, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to table this document, entitled “Storyteller and Team Lead”, reference number PCO20J-021515-000073. I believe it is proof that the government does have a serious job plan. I am sure they want this on the record as it shows how serious they are about employing Canadians throughout the pandemic.

The Deputy Speaker: I think what we heard was a unanimous consent request for tabling a document. This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask those who are opposed to this request to express their disagreement.

Accordingly, all those opposed to granting unanimous consent to table this document will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: We do not have unanimous consent.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

TAMILS

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition signed by 409 Canadians. It is in support of the five men who walked from Toronto to Ottawa and the three who walked from Montreal to Ottawa to bring to light the issues of the families of those who have disappeared. As colleagues know, 60,000 to 100,000 Tamils disappeared during the last phase of the war in Sri Lanka, and this petition is to bring attention to their plight.

The petitioners ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs for a response.

• (1210)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present petition e-2710, which has been signed by over 1,100 Canadians. It relates to the ongoing debates around Israel's plans to annex the occupied Palestinian West Bank. The Government of Canada opposes this, of course. It would be an illegal act should it happen.

The undersigned citizens and residents of Canada call on the government to put some force behind the call that Israel step back from this illegal action by banning the importation of settlement products into Canada, incorporating a settlement exclusion clause into the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement, differentiating between those products made within legal Israel and those of the occupied territories and asking the Canada Revenue Agency to take steps relating to the charitable status of the Jewish National Fund of Canada, which is supporting illegal settlements.

OPIOIDS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition on the opioid crisis. The petitioners are from Port Alberni, Qualicum and Parksville. They note that more lives

Routine Proceedings

have been lost, over 15,000, to a tainted drug supply and that this could have been prevented. They say there have been more lives lost to the opioid crisis than to COVID-19, SARS and H1N1. They are simply asking the government to show that it understands the seriousness of the crisis by declaring it a public health emergency, which needs to happen, under the Emergencies Act, for the government to develop a plan to save lives.

The petitioners are asking the government to reform current drug policy and to create, with urgency and immediacy, a system to provide safe, unadulterated access to substances so that people who use substances, experimentally, recreationally or chronically, are not at imminent risk of overdose because of a contaminated source.

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to table petition e-2636, a petition signed by nearly 3,000 Canadians from coast to coast to coast. The petition calls for the government to put in place a measure that would see menstrual products, namely tampons and pads, provided for free in all federally regulated workplaces. The petition seeks to revamp an initiative brought forward originally by this government in May 2019, an initiative that has so far gone through consultation but has not been introduced with a concrete outcome. The petitioners call on the government to take this very seriously.

I commend the individual who introduced the petition. She is a former constituent. Her name is Rachel Ettinger. She and other Canadians have been calling for this for a long time. She is a passionate advocate and champion of women's rights and human rights. The petition is a serious one.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up the motion before it, the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country was about to start the five-minute period for questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very encouraged, as I know many of my colleagues were, by the presentation of this bill. We appreciate the comments from the minister and members of the opposition, and hopefully the bill will receive unanimous support from the House. With that sort of support, we can anticipate that the bill will get to the committee stage sooner rather than later.

Given the importance of the training process for judges, I am wondering if the member could provide her thoughts on how nice it would be, given the potential support for the bill and the history of the bill in the chamber, to see it pass.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this bill shows what can happen when parliamentarians follow the full powers and processes of Parliament with a bill that has been amended and has already gone to committee at some point. It is really important for us to fulfill all of our duties and all of the processes that a bill should have, and it has brought us to this point today. Unlike in other situations when bills have not gone through full debate or have not been sent to committee, this is a really good example of what we can do to bring a bill to a better place. This our job and our role, and it is what we should continue to do.

• (1215)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that, along with my colleagues, I also welcome Bill C-3. It is long overdue.

I also want to thank my colleagues for the very raw and difficult stories they have shared today of their experiences with sexual assault.

I have heard a lot today about the impacts of stereotypes and myths, which have resulted in the abhorrent treatment by judges of women who are seeking justice for sexual assault. I would go further and state that sexual assault cases that have resulted in the vile treatment of victims have also been a result of racist, classist and misogynistic beliefs, including beliefs that support the hypersexualization of indigenous women, as noted by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It stated that the "Hyper-sexualization [of indigenous women] has created a perception that they're always sexually available, which causes people to dismiss violence against them."

Does my hon. colleague agree that anti-racist and anti-colonial training is also just as needed to protect sexual assault victims who are seeking justice?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, when we are dealing with really big issues like what we are talking about here today, there is never one silver bullet; there are always multiple levers that can assist. This bill is one of those levers. It is important that our judicial system be fair and that we have judges who are properly trained and who will write into their decisions the rationale for those decisions. This is one of those levers that we are able to utilize as part of the greater conversations we are having in dealing with issues within our society.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Jean.

We cannot talk about Bill C-3 without first highlighting the outstanding work being done by the members of our justice system.

In both Quebec and Canada, as far as we can tell, the justice system meets society's needs quite well.

I feel this is worth mentioning, because the main, if not only, criticism we had about Bill C-3, the former Bill C-5, was that we needed to move carefully with regard to judicial independence. I was concerned about this, and I will come back to it later.

That being said, I think our judges are doing an outstanding job, but they need more tools. This is important in our society. This is not to criticize their work, but we need to make sure they have the necessary tools on hand to get the job done.

The justice system is the backbone of any society. It enables citizens to resolve all disputes together through the courts, instead of taking the law into their own hands. Both civil and criminal matters are brought to a judge, who is expected to be impartial and competent.

Bill C-3 does address the issue of judicial competence, and I think we should give it our full attention to ensure that it comes into force as soon as possible.

This bill was first introduced in 2017 by the Hon. Rona Ambrose, the interim leader of the Conservative Party at the time. The Bloc Québécois enthusiastically supported what was then Bill C-337. At one point, I even moved a motion in the House to have the Senate deal with Bill C-337 quickly so that it could come into force as quickly as possible; the motion passed unanimously.

Then Parliament was dissolved, which meant that Bill C-337 could not be brought into force and we had to start back at square one last fall after the 2019 election. The same bill was reintroduced as Bill C-5, and committee hearings began. It got through first and second reading. The committee heard from a number of witnesses, and that was when everyone realized that, although most civil society stakeholders thought the bill was fine, essential even, the judiciary had some concerns.

The Hon. Justice Kent and the Hon. Justice MacDonald, former chief justice of Nova Scotia, appeared before the committee and made suggestions. I liked their approach. They never criticized the entire bill but provided constructive criticism and warned us to be careful. We must not throw the baby out with the bathwater, as they say. There is some work to do on how justice is administered in cases of sexual assault. That is what Bill C-3 proposes to do, but let us be careful that we do not undermine the authority of the courts over society in our attempt to improve the judicial process.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, the justice system is very important in our society. If we cannot benefit from judicial independence, if we can no longer rely on the independence, impartiality and competency of our courts, it will have major negative consequences for our society. We cannot let that happen.

I urge us to proceed with caution, but to do that, we need to go back to committee as soon as possible. We need to take into account the criticism that we have heard. It seems to me that the suggestions of Justices Kent and MacDonald deserve our attention and that some amendments should likely be made.

I believe it was Justice Macdonald who talked about minor adjustments regarding how these matters should be dealt with. Rather than imposing obligations on the Canadian Judicial Council or on judges, tools should be brought in and the Canadian Judicial Council should be asked to support the measures and ensure that judges appointed to the various courts of federal jurisdiction have access to those tools to be better equipped to hear sexual assault cases.

That is not to say that they are not well equipped to hear them now, of course, but when it comes to sexual assault, I believe exceptional sensitivity is needed in the administration of justice.

• (1220)

The courts should take a special approach to these types of cases. We need to remember that testifying is usually a traumatizing experience for victims of sexual assault. They are reliving the tragic events that brought them to court. Judges need to be aware of this, and the bill will help judges and give them the tools to understand this reality and better deal with these kinds of cases.

The Bloc Québécois will support this bill, as we did in 2017 and as we did last year with Bill C-5. We look forward to working in committee and proposing necessary amendments to make Bill C-3 a bill that the Hon. Rona Ambrose would be proud of, that I would be proud of and that all parliamentarians in the House will be proud of.

This is an urgent matter, and it was urgent in 2017. I pointed out this urgency in a motion that passed unanimously and that called on the Senate to promptly adopt the bill. It was urgent in the spring. It

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is even more urgent now. Let us make sure that we do not end up with another election in the coming months, which would force us to start this process all over again.

• (1225)

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see you in that chair. This should be memorable.

I have a question for my hon. colleague from Rivière-du-Nord, who has seen several iterations of the bill and reiterated the urgency to quickly pass this one.

Is it all the more urgent because we have only just returned from prorogation and we are in a period of uncertainty? We do not know what is going to happen with Parliament and we would like the bill to be reviewed quickly in committee to be passed even more quickly.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to see you in that chair. With all due respect to the usual Speaker who does exceptional work, I commend you on your excellent interventions.

To answer the question from my colleague from Saint-Jean, I agree with her that there is an urgency here. We just finished an oral question period during which the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons answered our questions—asking him to intervene on urgent economic matters—by saying that we would soon be facing an election. It seems our colleagues in the government are anxious to spar again and call all Quebecers and Canadians back to an election even though it has not been a full year since we were elected. We have that threat hanging over our heads.

I agree with my colleague that it is truly a shame that Bill C-3 is suffering the same fate as Bills C-337 and C-5, its predecessors. I think we should show the public some respect.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was sitting with the member from the Bloc on the justice committee when this bill was last there. I agree with him: this really does signify the struggle between the role of Parliament and our judicial system. I do not want people to think that Bill C-3 is going to solve all of the problems with the justice system.

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Would the member agree that it is also important that the federal government, and indeed our provincial governments, step in to make sure that complainants in sexual assault cases are also provided with adequate social supports and adequate information about the court process, and that we have proper legal education for lawyers who are involved in trying the cases so that those people have the support they need?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Bill C-3 is a tool. It is not a magic solution, it is not a panacea and there is no genie in the bottle. It is a tool that will help our judiciary be more efficient.

We support the bill and we look forward to it coming into force, but additional training should be provided to all those working in the judicial sector, whether they are lawyers or community organizations working on behalf of and supporting victims. I agree with my colleague that this is urgent.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was going to start my opening speech by using my time to say that I am pleased to be back in the House. I was going to tell the Speaker that I am pleased to see him again, but I have had the privilege of meeting the current chair occupant outside the House on other occasions. Therefore, I will save my greetings to the Speaker for another time.

I would like to talk about the Judges Act, which is being amended by Bill C-3. The part on amending the Criminal Code to require that judges provide reasons for their decisions is particularly interesting and important because that is something we want in all decisions made by the courts in general. I find this to be an interesting addition to the Criminal Code, but I do not intend to dwell on this particular aspect of the bill.

It would be untrue to say that judges would be forced to undergo training or that they would not want to do it. Judges have access to all kinds of training, and they often seek out training in areas that are not necessarily connected to the types of cases they normally hear. One of my colleagues in the Quebec bar gives on-demand training to a number of judges on health law and forced hospitalizations. Often, the judges who attend this training have never dealt with those types of cases.

From what I understand, the interest is there. The judiciary is eager to look at expanding training. The advantage of requiring this type of training is that better training resources will become available. The training will be standardized across the judiciary, to ensure that it is appropriate, and it will be given by qualified trainers.

Since this training is being developed, perhaps it could be made available to a larger audience. Lawyers in particular may also want to attend these seminars, these training courses, and educate themselves. One thing will lead to another and that is how we will ensure that the training leads to a better understanding of the reality of victims of sexual assault.

As a civil rights lawyer, I want to talk about this bill from another point of view. As was already mentioned, we have already talked

quite a bit about this issue, since this bill has come before the House in different forms several times before. I want to talk about it more from a civil law perspective. We have never talked about how the training will not just be given to judges who hear sexual assault cases. It will be mandatory for everyone who wants to work in the superior courts of Quebec and the provinces. Take, for example, family law judges. They, too, will be required to take this training. I find that especially interesting.

According to the statistics, many women are victims of sexual assault in their lives and often they know their assailant. That means that sexual assault may come up in the background of a case even when it is not the main issue.

This is something that comes up again and again in family law, an area that I myself practised in. For instance, custody rulings get handed down in domestic violence cases, where we know that one parent was sexually assaulted by the other.

Providing judges with adequate training on matters related to sexual assault will ensure they are better equipped to seek out information, ask questions, understand the reality of a witness who has to testify in front of their assailant, and it may make it easier for them to research information and render more uniform rulings. At the same time, the assault aspect will not cloud the main issue too much.

This is more of a wish that I have, but what if this training provided to superior court judges—who will hear civil cases, among others—were to be a first step towards making better use of the other options available to victims of sexual assault? We have a tendency to fixate purely on criminal proceedings, but unfortunately, the criminal court process is often more punitive and less restorative for victims. That is a drawback right now.

● (1230)

Ensuring that training is available to judges may be the first step toward persuading victims of sexual assault to turn to civil courts more often. Some victims of sexual assault may seek some form of reparation or, in some cases, mediation, from a civil court.

Knowing that judges have received this training, we can hope that some victims will turn to civil courts because they believe they have a better chance of obtaining a ruling in their favour given that the burden of proof is lower than it is in criminal cases. Rulings can focus more on the victim than on prison sentences, and some victims who have gone through years of psychotherapy may get those costs reimbursed.

Government Orders

The Youth Criminal Justice Act provides an alternative, which is lots of mediation following a sentence an adolescent may have received for sexual assault. We have seen that victims do use this.

This does not apply in all cases. Victims may at times find it easier to move on after receiving a letter of apology or learning that the abuser has taken training or made a donation to a violence prevention or women's advocacy organization.

Civil courts obviously fall under Quebec and provincial jurisdiction, but I hope Bill C-3 will somehow open the door to the possibility of including, in sexual assault cases, a restorative component more common in the civil courts. We want to enhance people's trust in the courts, and not just criminal courts.

We are hearing that Quebec City wants to establish specialized courts to hear sexual assault cases. Given that judges in all kinds of courts will receive this training, they may take it upon themselves to promote such avenues of recourse. In some cases, this could be done by improving legal aid so that people who rely on legal aid can seek redress through the civil courts.

For all these good reasons, I, like my colleagues, will obviously be supporting Bill C-3. It is a step in the right direction but we must not view this bill as an end in itself. Instead, we should view it as a beginning and the means that will ultimately let us have more confidence in the judicial system and let women—who, unfortunately, continue to be the main victims of sexual assault—believe that they have a voice and that, above all, that their voice is heard.

I have not used all the time I have been allocated, but I hope I have brought the debate around to something a little different. The issue of sexual assault has often been examined from the criminal perspective. However, I believe that we would all learn by examining this issue from a much broader perspective because, by its very nature, it has much broader implications.

• (1235)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her speech. I would like to ask her a question regarding what happened in Quebec a few days ago when an indigenous woman went to the hospital.

We are well aware that the problem of racism and discrimination against indigenous people, Black people and people of colour is very serious. This applies to all institutions.

How does the member think this bill can improve the situation in our institutions, our justice system and our penal system?

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank the parliamentary secretary for his very important question.

I was hoping to talk about this issue in a broader sense, so I thank him for doing so and reminding us that the bill may be useful in many ways.

The Bloc Québécois has acknowledged that systemic racism exists, including towards indigenous people. We know that there will be several dimensions to the training. It will be primarily on sexual assault, but it will also address the social context, the woman's situ-

ation and the family situation. It is hoped that the training will improve the courts and help combat systemic racism.

Ideally, we can also hope that training will be provided to decision-makers and various stakeholders from every background. I think that training is the path to take. This is certainly a step in the right direction, even if training will not solve every problem.

• (1240)

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that my colleague from Saint-Jean is bringing the conversation around to the topic of civil courts. I think that is important.

I would like her to comment on one aspect of the bill. In committee, we heard judges say that we needed to be careful. They also told us that it was a good idea to improve training for judges, but we must not undermine the authority of the courts or judicial independence, because that is the most sacred aspect of our judicial system. Parliament must not dictate a response to the courts. I think this is a sensitive issue. The committee will have to be very cautious on this.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on this aspect of Bill C-3.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, generally speaking, training is never a bad thing. As I mentioned, judges already receive training on a plethora of other subjects, and it does not skew their reasoning. Furthermore, the training will be for superior court judges.

If a judge is perceived as being biased, here is what I can say. First, they will have to provide more reasons for their decisions. Second, there will always be the possibility of appealing the decision. Judges are human, which means they are not infallible. Training is a way to support them.

I hardly think the training will create any biases. However, there are mechanisms and safeguards that will enable us to seek recourse in the event of an error. In fact, that error might not even be caused by the training.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate the member on her speech and also recognize the amazing work we did together at PROC to look at how we could do this all virtually. I am very happy to be here participating with members across Canada. I think it is a wonderful progress of democracy during these very trying times.

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I would like to ask the member to speak a bit about how she sees this impacting women. We have had a lot of women come forward in my riding who have faced different kinds of sexual assault cases and have felt diminished and afraid of coming forward because of this situation and the history of our legal system in this country. I wonder if she could speak to that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned at the outset, I do not think that Bill C-3 will solve all the problems.

However, the fact that the training will be offered to all superior court judges could, in some way, help restore the confidence of victims in the justice system and, as I was saying, that may open the door to more avenues of recourse. There can never be enough good recourse options to help victims of sexual assault so this is a step in the right direction.

However, I have no problem saying that this is not enough. There is still a lot of work to be done, but I think that this is an excellent start. If we look at this bill from that perspective and remember that it opens the door to civil courts, it would be a mistake not to move forward with it.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a real honour for me to participate in the debate today on Bill C-3, to give the position of the NDP in my role as the deputy justice critic.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues from the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois for their interventions. The nature and tone of today's debate on the bill and the sensitive subject matter it deals with shows how well this Parliament can work and the seriousness with which we can treat these particularly sensitive subjects.

It is a little strange to be back at second reading on the bill before us. As members know, it is the reincarnation of a previous bill, Bill C-5, which was debated in the first session of the 43rd Parliament. Of course that bill was passed in one day and made its way to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights where we did have two days of witness testimony. It feels like we are reversing things and going back in time, but it is good that the bill is being brought forward in short order by the Minister of Justice. I have to thank him for placing it on the priority list. Hopefully, we can see the second reading debate stage not take up too much time so we can get back to that all-important committee work.

When the previous bill was debated on February 19, we heard much of the same comments as has been evident in the debate today. I hope that after maybe a few more interventions, depending on how many other members can speak, we can find some kind of unanimous consent to not go to a recorded division but pass the bill on a voice vote, as was done on February 19 of this year, so the justice committee can get back to its work.

I want to also acknowledge the incredibly important role that judges have in our society. I do not think the jobs they do get enough credit because of the gravity of their decisions. Indeed, judges have an incredibly important job. They not only have to be well versed in the facts of law, but they have to interpret that law

and apply it to the facts of the case before them, knowing full well that their decisions are going to have profound consequences either for the accused or for the person who brought forward the complaint. It is something that we should not take lightly and it is a position that deserves our utmost respect.

I want to acknowledge the role of the former interim Conservative Party leader, the Hon. Rona Ambrose, who brought forward the original version of the bill back in the 42nd Parliament through her private member's bill, Bill C-337. At that time, she recognized how important the bill was. In that 42nd Parliament, it was good to see that unanimous consent was given to send the bill to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, which did some very important work as well.

We have the bill before us because there is a wide body of evidence of a lack of trust in the justice system, particularly by people whose experiences have been marginalized and so on. We are very much supportive of the intent behind Bill C-3. We do indeed want to see it get to committee, because it is at committee where that all-important witness testimony will highlight why the specific sections of the bill are necessary. I know there is debate at committee as to whether the bill in its present form is properly worded, but that is something for a later stage.

However, it is important at this second reading stage of the debate to acknowledge that complainants in sexual assault cases are provided inadequate social supports, inadequate information about court processes and they are often confronted by a system that ignores their wishes. We should acknowledge that Bill C-3 will not solve those problems by itself. The bill is very narrow in its scope. It looks at the training that judges receive.

• (1245)

It is really important that in the context of the debate of the bill, we as parliamentarians take every opportunity we can to apply pressure to the government, to remind the government, that there is still much work to be done to ensure our justice system fully lives up to the expectations of everyone who has to use it. The fact that so many women, so many persons of colour, Black or indigenous members of those communities, have their experiences marginalized by the justice system and do not have the kind of confidence that others do. That is a real shortcoming and that has to be identified and fixed with appropriate funding and resources to ensure people have that confidence. In other words, a systemic review is needed to ensure we have a system that lives up to those needs.

There are other actors. It goes beyond just judges. We have seen problems before with our police services. We have seen problems with how lawyers behave in the courtroom. Therefore, many different actors could also benefit from this type of training.

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To highlight these points, it is helpful at this stage of the debate to really illuminate some of the statistics out there. It is estimated that only 5% of sexual assaults are reported to the police or that one in three women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. In 82% of these sexual assaults, the offender is known to the victim, and 28% of Canadians have said that they have experienced workplace sexual assault or violence.

We know, in breaking down the statistics further, that transgender people are far more likely to experience intimate partner violence. Women who are living with physical or cognitive impairments are two to three times more likely to experience sexual violence. Indigenous women are far more likely to experience this sexual violence, and of course senior women. The statistics are there. They are not a secret. They have been well known for decades now. The fact that we are in 2020 still speaking about the need for this training is rightly construed as a source of national shame, but also an important focal point and an impetus for us as parliamentarians to redouble our efforts to ensure we are building that system.

I remember from the previous debates in the first session on Bill C-5 that my Conservative colleagues had raised concerns at that time about some of the actions of the Parole Board of Canada. We know full well also that the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada has also had problems. Those judicial bodies, because they do fall under federal jurisdiction, the members of those particular boards could probably also benefit from this mandated training. I urge the government and the Minister of Justice to possibly look at ways we can expand this type of mandatory training to the appointees who sit on those boards.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my comments, the previous version of this bill in the 42nd Parliament was Ms. Ambrose's Bill C-337 and that bill was referred to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in March 2017. During that time, the Status of Women committee had five meetings on the bill. It had 25 witnesses come before the committee and the bill was reported back to the House with some amendments. One of the big things to emerge from the committee study of that bill was to try to find a definition and exploration of the term "social context".

Social context in the meaning of this bill will require that judges take into the account the context of the cases they hear and not be, and this is really important, influenced by attitudes based on the stereotypes, myths or prejudice that exist in our society.

• (1250)

Many of those same witnesses who before the Status of Women committee in 2017 also appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. We had two meetings on March 10 and March 12, right before COVID-19 shut everything down for us. Those groups of witnesses in those two meetings included the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity, the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, the DisAbled Women's Network Canada, the Canadian Judicial Council and the National Judicial Institute. The testimony we heard mirrored a lot of what was heard back in 2017.

When this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights again, I hope it will take into account that previous testimony and perhaps pass a motion to accept it as part of the

study on the bill so we do not have to go over old steps. However, there will be some debate on the particular wording of the bill, which I will go into a bit later in my remarks.

When we look at the substance of the bill, it seeks to ensure that judicial candidates have a full and current understanding of sexual assault laws, that they know the principles of consent and the conduct of sexual assault proceedings, that they are educated on the myths and stereotypes of sexual assault complainants and that it will all be done through training seminars. This is needed because we have seen through the actions of various judges that this training is sorely needed.

With respect to what the Canadian Judicial Council and the National Judicial Institute have said, this type of training is already happening. However, because we have this evidence of judges making inappropriate statements at trial, of following outdated myths and stereotypes, these have profound impacts on the victims of sexual assault and further erode the general trust in our judicial system.

When Bill C-337 was sent to the Senate, the Senate legal and constitutional affairs committee made some amendments to it. I understand the government's version of the bill we have before us today is a lot more in line with the Senate's version of the bill because of the constitutional concerns in place.

A big focal point of the bill will be the struggle between the role of Parliament and our judiciary. I understand that it is extremely important that our judges remain free of any type of political influence. As parliamentarians, we have a role to introduce legislation that falls within the social context we operate within. Therefore, our bills are often the product of the demands of society, of the members of the public who we serve.

When it comes to specific federal statutes like the Judges Act, there is a careful and considered role for Parliament in mandating the types of training we expect our judges to have. We escape any constitutional conundrums, because once the judges have taken that training, that is where Parliament's role ends and it is where it should end. We do not want to have any type of influence over how the judge uses that training. We simply want to know that the judge has taken the training and understands the full scope of sexual assault laws and outdated myths and stereotypes so we can build up the confidence that is sorely needed.

These comments have been argued in the public sphere. I know concerns have been echoed by Michael Spratt, who is no stranger to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and has often written quite lengthily on the subject, and I appreciate his views. His concerns with respect to this legislation absolutely need to be taken into account.

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We have also seen a commentary from Emmett Macfarlane, who is a constitutional law professor at the University of Waterloo. He believes Parliament has a legitimate role to step in and mandate that there are substantive qualifications for the judges of our land as well as, through legislation, mandate the type of training we want to see.

• (1255)

The government has provided a charter statement that addresses some of the concerns that fall under this, particularly section 11 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and so on. I think that is a good guideline for parliamentarians to use as a road map when we continue our deliberations at the justice committee. However, I do not think there is going to be any kind of disagreement that this bill is needed, especially from parliamentarians. What I am seeing already is that there is, in fact, going to be unanimous consent that this bill is worthy and that it warrants being sent to committee. If the actions of the 42nd Parliament are any guide to this one, I suspect that we may hopefully see this bill clear both Houses of Parliament and be sent to the Governor General for royal assent.

In the few minutes I have remaining, I think it is also important to talk about some of the other problematic areas that we have in our justice system. For this particular section, I want to reference the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, particularly call to action number 27, which called upon the Federation of Law Societies of Canada to:

...ensure that lawyers receive appropriate cultural competency training, which includes the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

I acknowledge that this is beyond the scope of Bill C-3, and we certainly might run into problems in an attempt to fit that kind of training into a future bill, but I think the concerns that indigenous people in Canada have with the justice system, and concerns that Black Canadians and people of colour have with the systemic racism that is in existence, must remain top of mind, even if it is not possible for us to bring forward a legislative fix to them. I know they were referenced in the Speech from the Throne. I also want to thank all members of the Parliamentary Black Caucus, which put forward that statement as a road map for the action we need to take. I think those concerns are entirely appropriate to highlight during our debate on this bill, because it is following through in the same vein of people whose experiences have been marginalized through the justice system.

In conclusion, I would like to say that myths and stereotypes continue to have extremely negative impacts on people. It is extremely important that we as parliamentarians listen to the voices of people who have been marginalized by the justice system. Women's and LGBTQ organizations specifically must be consulted in developing the continuing education program on issues of sexual assault and social context. The Liberal government accepted all the findings in the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the report noted that apathy from police services is indicative of ongoing colonial violence, racism and sexism, revictimizing indigenous women, girls and two-spirit peoples, so that must be paid attention to. As well,

we must understand that sexual assault and gender-based violence disproportionately impacts women, minorities, poor people, persons living with disabilities, LGBTQ+ communities, sex workers and other marginalized communities.

I will conclude there. I appreciate having this opportunity to give my thoughts on Bill C-3, and I look forward to my colleagues helping to pass this bill in short order and sending it to committee.

* * *

• (1300)

[Translation]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill C-4, An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19.

* * *

• (1305)

ROYAL ASSENT

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

October 2, 2020

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Julie Payette, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 2nd day of October, 2020, at 12:08 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Assunta Di Lorenzo

* * *

[English]

JUDGES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for his comments, his analysis of this bill and his important contributions to the justice committee in the last Parliament.

The member raised a couple of issues that I wanted to ask about, with respect to this bill. He raised the issue of judicial independence and he raised the issue about the credibility of, and the faith that Canadians have in, the administration of justice.

As the member knows, this bill clarifies that seminars and education would be provided on things like sexual assault law and social context, and that the curriculum would be developed in consultation with external groups such as victims' groups, women's groups, etc. However, the curriculum itself would be devised, after that consultation, by the judges themselves and delivered by judges to judges through vehicles like the National Judicial Institute.

The first question is whether that appropriately meets the constitutional principle of judicial independence, as the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford outlined.

Second, the bill also calls for a tabling in Parliament annually of the seminars that were delivered and the numbers of people attending. What would that do to contribute to the administration of justice and the credibility and confidence that people in this country have in that system?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I enjoy working with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, both in the last Parliament and now.

I do believe that the fact that we are mandating that the training would be overseen by judges is an appropriate place for Parliament's role to end. I believe that we satisfy the constitutional concerns. That is why I am providing my support to this bill. There may have to be some fine tuning with some of the language at committee. I do not want to presuppose the committee's work, but as a first step the bill that we have before us passes muster, and we will have to see if there is any fine tuning that can be done.

On the second part of the parliamentary secretary's question, with regard to the seminars and reporting back to Parliament, I believe that it is always in society's interests that we have some kind of feedback mechanism where we can keep tabs on how our legislation is actually impacting the people it is supposed to be impacting, but also that accountability for members of the public who have to go through the justice system, especially those who have been marginalized—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friend from the west coast is a proud British Columbian as am I, and I thank him for his speech today.

We recognize in this particular bill that there cannot be inequality across this great country. Someone may be impacted if a particular judge does not have the familiarity or the sensitivity to wade through very difficult issues, and that is what this bill seeks to address.

Further than that, there is a question of the chicken-and-egg argument. Some people believe that justices should remain isolated and decide how to deal with their system versus it being done by elected politicians such as us.

I have a concern, as did the member of Parliament for Windsor West, about Crown copyright and how Crown copyright defers to the institution to decide how it will make its information known. This is specific because, in some parts of the country, provincial courts will give out information widely available on the Internet, while some others will not. That affects access to the public knowledge of justice.

Does the member agree that there are other things that we, as politicians, need to raise so the system can see its gaps and respond?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments about the “chicken and the egg” problem. On my

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small farming property, I have both chickens and eggs, so I understand that concept very well.

I will always defer to my colleague from Windsor West on the issues of copyright. His expertise on that subject is well known, both within our caucus and within the broader House of Commons.

The member raises an important point about how different provincial jurisdictions have different approaches. Bringing it back to the bill, there is also the fact that 95% of sexual assault cases are going to be heard by judges appointed at the provincial level. It is very important that the federal government take note of that, and have some kind of unified policy with its provincial counterparts.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

As my colleagues from Saint-Jean and Rivière-du-Nord said, this bill is a first step. There will be work to be done in committee, and the Bloc would like to collaborate on those efforts.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on an idea raised by my colleague from Saint-Jean. This bill may open the door to other types of recourse or dialogue. In sexual assault cases we need to consider whether victims trust the system. The burden of proof can be challenging. The idea would be to use civil courts to expand the dialogue and look at other forms of redress. The idea would be to help victims regain confidence in the system.

We could also broaden the dialogue on what constitutes sexual assault. An online petition was started on the House of Commons website to expand the dialogue. Could a form of psychological violence be considered sexual assault in cases of domestic violence?

I would like to hear what the member thinks about how this bill could help expand the dialogue and help victims regain confidence in the system.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Shefford for bringing up the subject of trust. When it comes to the Criminal Code and Judges Act, these address the limits of federal Parliament. We have the ability to legislate both those federal statutes, but the administration of justice, and how our various provincial courts operate, fall under provincial jurisdiction. I mentioned at the beginning of my speech why it is so important that the federal government work with the provinces to make sure we have those financial supports in place for people who go through the justice system. This bill, by itself, is not going to solve those problems. We need to have a system to build that trust for victims of sexual violence so they have the confidence to bring their complaints forward, knowing they will get a fair trial and fair treatment.

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[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his very interesting speech.

I believe there is a consensus here in the House that the bill is a step in the right direction. It is absolutely essential that justices have training to eliminate prejudice in sexual assault cases. As my colleague from Shefford stated, having confidence in the justice system is also another very important factor.

However, even before arriving in court, many of these women are denied services that are absolutely essential. Not so long ago, I met with representatives of the Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes. They pointed out that, every year, 10,000 women who are victims of domestic abuse and ask for help cannot find a room for lack of availability.

There is therefore a very serious underlying problem. These women are forced to return home to their violent spouse or end up homeless and on the street. I would like to know if my colleague agrees with me that for there to be real justice we also must have basic services.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree with my colleague more. His comments are particularly important, especially in the context of the pandemic we now find ourselves in.

As we all know, this pandemic has disproportionately impacted women in the workplace, who have often been forced to go back home because they may have lost their job or they have to look after children. Absolutely, there are so many women in my community who face sexual violence and do not have appropriate housing options.

If we are going to talk about really lifting women up, really lifting up people who experience sexual violence, it is absolutely critical that we have those baseline services in place to ensure they have the supports necessary for confidence in going through the justice system. I could not agree with the member more.

• (1315)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of being vice-chair of the status of women committee when we studied this bill originally.

During testimony, Prof. Carissima Mathen said:

That's been a somewhat unheralded earthquake in the world of judicial appointments.... The innovations that have been done around judicial appointments...have been quite remarkable.

I am wondering if the hon. member could speak to the importance of ensuring that we get the right people on the bench, not just training but ensuring that we have the right people and that we have a broad diversity of people being appointed to the bench.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I do agree with the member. Ultimately, we want to see our judicial bench reflective of the cultural mosaic and diversity that we see in Canada. That would include persons of colour, Black Canadians and indigenous people. We want to see that diversity reflected on the bench so that the peo-

ple who are making decisions in these profound and very important cases have that kind of understanding and the lived experiences that so many members of our society have every day.

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my presentation comes with a story, which comes with a trigger warning.

The keg party was a 10-minute walk from Ava's new home at Delaware Hall residence, just north of Western University's soaring stone gates. It was the Friday after Thanksgiving, and word had it the organizers had already sold more than 200 tickets. She had been looking forward to it all week, her first big bash as a university student. Ava left the dorm with her friends around 10:15 p.m., already feeling a bit tipsy from the drinks they had while getting ready. She did not care much for the taste of beer, so the 18-year-old brought her own drink in a large plastic bottle that had a straw affixed to the lid: 10 shots of vodka mixed with diet lemonade.

Like many of the neighbouring properties, the vast, nearly century-old home had been converted into student housing. The party washed over every floor and spilled onto the lawn, which was littered with red plastic cups. Someone handed Ava a beer, which she accepted, but then quietly set aside, preferring to sip what she had brought. She and her friends watched drinking games, flip cup and beer pong.

As the night went on, things became more and more fuzzy. Ava remembers being outside with her friends and then leaving to find the washroom inside, with her nearly empty drink in hand. She stumbled off alone. Somewhere along the line, she is not sure when, she found herself talking to a guy from the party. He looked to be a few years older than her, with dark messy hair and a slim build. She remembers they were outside and kissing, and then she blacked out.

When things came back into focus, Ava says she was on the ground near a pine tree at the north side of the house. She was naked and cold and lying in the dirt. The man was inside her. "You're hurting me, stop", she remembers telling him. She had only had sex once before. "I don't want to hurt you, baby", he said, but he did not stop. Ava struggled to concentrate and stay conscious. "No, stop", she said again and again, and he ignored her. Terror shot through Ava's body. In that moment, she realized the man had not simply misunderstood her. He was not playing around; he was raping her. No one could hear her call for help. She had no idea what to do. She wondered if he would kill her when it was over. She stopped fighting and went still.

Suddenly, there was a flash. Ava looked over and saw four or five men pointing cellphone cameras in her direction. She became frantic. The man on top of her ran away. He left his wallet behind, police later told Ava. She was left naked and curled on the ground, her back and hair covered in dirt. Two women who heard Ava sobbing found her shortly after.

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It was October 16, 2010, more than five years before an eerily similar attack at Stanford University would make international headlines. Ava's story, however, never made the news. Her case did not go to court. Her assailant was never arrested, never charged. In fact, the London Police Service detective concluded that what happened to Ava that night was not a crime.

There are many ways to shut a case without laying a charge. If there is not enough evidence, there is a closure code for that. If a complainant does not want to proceed with charges, there is a code for that, too. On November 13, 2010, the detective closed Ava's file as "unfounded", another formal police classification that rendered her allegations baseless. It meant that a crime neither was attempted nor occurred. It did not immediately brand Ava a liar, necessarily, but it meant she was not raped. According to police records, the suspect was given a warning.

"What does unfounded mean to you? What does unfounded mean to anybody? It means 'You're lying,'" says Ottawa criminologist Holly Johnson, who has extensively studied that city's unfounded cases. She believes that high rates send a message that police don't believe large numbers of complainants, "which reinforces damaging myths that women lie about sexual victimization, and could act as a deterrent to already low reporting."

● (1320)

Until a few years ago, unfounded statistics were kept secret, but that was not always the case:

Until 2003, Statistics Canada released unfounded numbers. The last year for which numbers are available is 2002, when the national unfounded rate for sexual offences was 16 per cent. The agency collects data through the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, a national set of [data] standards that every police service is supposed to follow. The definition of unfounded, along with all other clearance codes, is laid out explicitly in the UCRS protocols.

But after Statistics Canada raised concerns that police services weren't using the category consistently—for instance, misclassifying as unfounded cases that simply did not have enough evidence to lay a charge; or, more seriously, not recording unfounded cases at all—Statistics Canada decided to stop collecting the data altogether, rather than force police to follow the rules.

That was an excerpt from Robyn Doolittle's series in *The Globe and Mail* back in February 2017. We were all in the House of Commons in another building when that report came out. It was a big moment. It caused a ripple of positive changes for survivors of gender-based violence across the country.

My hon. colleague, the incredible Ralph Goodale, who was our minister of public safety at the time, worked with police services and brought back the coverage and the statistics being collected on unfounded cases. There continues to be work across the country within police services to continue to improve the process for victims and survivors.

I share this story now because I have 20 minutes, but also because I want to make sure. We have had this debate over and over again in the House, as my colleagues have said. Advocates and survivors have been fighting and saying stories like this are real for decades upon decades. I wanted to share the story because I wanted to make sure that survivors are at the centre of the conversations we have about Bill C-3. I also wanted to make sure that, for all the work that remains on the issues around sexual and gender-based violence and violence against women and girls, we remember survivors first and foremost and the courage it takes to step up and even report a case, let alone tell their stories so that others can learn from them and make a change.

I also want to acknowledge the important role that every sector plays and the important role that journalism, like Robyn Doolittle's piece, plays in moving us all forward.

Now let us go back to Ava. Let us say that Ava was believed to be telling the truth. Let us say that Ava did go to court. How should she be treated after having endured what she experienced? "Why couldn't you just keep your knees together?" or "sex and pain sometimes go together".

What if she had been killed and happened to be indigenous, as Cindy Gladue was, a Métis and Cree woman from Edmonton? The jury in that case repeatedly heard Gladue referred to as a "prostitute" and as a "native" in the courtroom. The trial ended in an acquittal, but the Supreme Court ruled in May 2019 that the man accused of killing her should be retried for manslaughter, but not first-degree murder. In its ruling, the high court said there was evidence that Ms. Gladue's sexual history was mishandled and that trial judges should caution juries against relying on prejudices against indigenous women and girls.

● (1325)

I join members today from my house, not that House, in Peterborough—Kawartha on traditional Williams Treaties land. It is the only place I have ever been able to feel safe and that I belong. I share this with members because, despite not being physically in the House, I have been able to listen to the debate and thoughtful conversations by hon. colleagues from across party lines on this bill.

As the Minister for Women in the post #MeToo era and the post #BeenRapedNeverReported era and during the mourning by all of us at the passing of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, I acknowledge that what we are talking about in the House and the way my hon. colleagues are talking about this very important issue is a big moment for victims, survivors and the feminist movement, who have been fighting hard, sometimes with no outcome. For decision-makers like us to take issues such as this as seriously as we are, the fact that we are having this conversation in the way we are with the tone we have, is healing for survivors. I want to thank my colleagues for that.

Somebody asked earlier why now, why do we have to move so quickly? We owe it to those survivors for their courage. We owe it to those who fought hard and brought us to this moment in time so we can enhance their confidence in our judicial system, our legal system and our democratic systems.

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As my hon. colleague said earlier, only about 5% of sexual assault cases are reported in the first place, and if they do not lead to a conviction a majority of the time, if they re-traumatize survivors or embolden and continue a culture of impunity, we have a problem. That is the problem we are working to solve together, and it is just one small but meaningful step for survivors like Ava, who share their stories in hopes of being believed, heard and listened to and prevent that kind of suffering from happening to someone else.

I am not going to go into the details of Bill C-3 because, first of all, we have heard debate on this again and again, and second, because my colleagues are well versed on this issue and have access to information. There is an opportunity for us, while this debate is under way, to dig a little deeper into the root causes of gender-based violence, the culture of impunity, the so-called rape culture and the generational trauma that is carried forward.

The hon. Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations is a colleague, of course, but she is also a mentor. I also think she is a flaming feminist, and I am so proud of her for that. She says that hurt people hurt people, not always, but they are more likely to. The survivors we are talking about are not just 18 years and older like Ava. Something like this happens every day in our communities. No culture and no region are immune, and in my own community, just a few weeks ago, a 61-year-old woman was sexually assaulted along one of our trails.

This is an issue that goes deep. One of the root causes is childhood trauma. Indeed, there are 11-year-old girls being raped, trafficked and harmed in our communities, and the conversation we are having is really just the tip of the iceberg. This particular bill is about a trauma-informed, culturally sensitive series of training modules to support the professional development of judges. As my colleague said, judges have a big job, and they are competent. As the law and the world evolve, we will all benefit from the additional training.

I have incredible respect for and confidence in our justice system here in Canada. It is among the best in the world and has come a very long way.

• (1330)

This December, we are going to be marking 50 years since the groundbreaking report by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, which was tabled to someone just like you, Mr. Speaker, in a House kind of like the one we are in right now. That report came up with 167 recommendations. We have come a long way since, and our justice system has come a long way since.

Fifty-plus years ago, a woman could not apply for a mortgage loan without her husband's signature. Fifty years ago, it was legal for a man to rape a woman if she happened to be his wife. Fifty-some years ago, if police were called to a case of domestic violence in a home, they would have to leave, because it was considered a matter between man and wife. Not too long ago, it was illegal for a woman to have an abortion. Not too long ago, it was illegal for same-sex couples to be married. We have come a long way and the law has evolved.

The story of Ruth Bader Ginsburg is a story of how people can move the institutions that provide healing and justice for victims,

and society forward. It has been over 50 years, and we have clarified the definition of "consent" in the law. There is a reverse onus around bail. Advocacy rights for feminist organizations have been restored. We apply an intersectional, gendered lens to all of our budgets and decisions as a federal government.

This step that we are taking is a small but significant step. I want to thank everybody who has worked hard and tenaciously to bring this bill back to this place again and again, including the Honourable Rona Ambrose. This is a multipartisan issue, and it is part of the third pillar of our federal strategy to address and prevent gender-based violence.

It is Women's History Month. Our experts, survivors and those who have come before us have told us first and foremost to put survivors and their families at the centre of our work, including those who, because of their indigenous identities and experiences, are disproportionately affected by violence. We were told to put survivors and their families first, and we listened. We were told by survivors themselves that prevention is the thing they are hoping for to prevent their pain from happening to someone else. Then we were told, and put into action with our \$200 million-plus strategy, that responsive legal and justice systems are key to that healing and key to addressing that culture of impunity and rape culture. We listened, and there is so much more work to be done. However, the fact we are having this conversation in the House and the tone we are having it with is a big deal.

We have already invested about \$50 million in emergency COVID response funds to support organizations across the country that are supporting survivors and their families. There are over 1,000 of them getting money to ensure that they are staying safe and open for women, children and LGBTQ2 Canadians in their hour of need. The Prime Minister, just a couple of hours ago, announced an additional \$50 million to support these incredible, hard-working, essential workers on the front lines of gender-based violence support, including \$10 million for women's shelters and sexual assault centres to help them continue to provide their critical services safely, \$10 million for organizations that are broadly working to address and prevent gender-based violence to indigenous peoples off reserve, and \$30 million for other women's organizations that are working to deliver GBV support to help combat the spread of COVID and address the increased demand for services. This brings the total emergency funding provided to gender-based violence organizations to \$100 million.

I want to thank all of our partners, including the Canadian Women's Foundation and Women's Shelters Canada for helping us move this forward.

If I had time, I would talk about rape culture, but I do not, and so I will wrap up here.

I am happy to answer any questions from my colleagues. I hope that in our deliberations we also reflect on why it has taken this long to pass a bill that seems like common sense to all of us.

• (1335)

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the minister for her very brave remarks. It certainly is not easy, particularly on the floor of the House of Commons, even virtually, to put on the record stories of the rape and victimization of women and the horrors they have gone through. I very much appreciate her bravery. She is really setting an example for women.

We know that one of the reasons women often do not come forward concerning their rapes and abuse is that they have to relive and retell that story to so many different levels of police and bureaucracy. It can be very revictimizing for them. I would like to hear the member's thoughts on that. She mentioned that we have so much more work to do, which I completely agree with.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her work on this issue and for her question. She is absolutely right. Without a trauma-informed lens, without a trauma-informed approach, the entire ecosystem of services and responders to survivors of gender-based violence run the risk of retraumatizing these courageous survivors who come forward to tell their story and seek justice.

There are investments happening to support women's organizations that provide healing and supports for victims and survivors as they go through the legal channels and other processes. In Peterborough, for example, they will go with her to court. They will go with her to get the rape kit and go through that process.

We have made some changes with how testimony is received, and I was grateful to see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice here, who is a very strong advocate of this work and

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who can speak with his “lawyeresque” to the changes that we have made. The reason this training in a trauma-informed approach is important is that it and the better understanding it brings will ensure that the victims are not retraumatized in our court system, and will encourage others to come forward as well.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her presentation.

As a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, I take a special interest in this bill. I have also worked with community organizations that help women who have experienced violence and rape. This is a very delicate subject, and my thoughts go out to all survivors.

My question is threefold.

This summer, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women met over two days to study how the COVID-19 pandemic has uniquely impacted women and how it has led to a rise in domestic violence.

How does my colleague think this bill ties in with the much-touted national action plan on violence?

This summer, I asked what kinds of measures might be included in such a plan and whether there was a time frame for the action plan. I am offering her a chance to give us some more answers.

Furthermore, the whole issue of prior consent is central to this bill. Prior consent is an issue that we are working very hard to educate the public on.

Finally, it is also important to provide enough funding for victims' groups. It is all well and good to restore faith in the system, but victims also need a little help. It will take more than the much-touted \$50 million she spoke about during the pandemic to ensure that all of these groups have sufficient funding to help victims through the judicial process with dignity. We need to be more proactive. There is a whole rape culture we need to dismantle.

At the end of her speech, she spoke about rape culture. Could she comment briefly on that?

• (1340)

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for my colleague's strong advocacy. Her first speech in the House of Commons was on December 6, shortly after we all came together for this new Parliament, and I appreciate that.

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The national action plan on gender-based violence is in the works. We have received agreement and principle to move forward with this from my honourable counterparts, and the provinces and territories. It is going to build on the existing work, while recognizing that the federal government does not have all the levers. In fact, the majority of the jurisdiction is with provinces and territories and, of course, with municipalities, which experience this on the ground.

My colleague knows that, for example, the issues around consent and sexual education are the purview of the provinces. I have been so encouraged that every single minister responsible for the status of women in every province and territory, regardless of partisan stripe, just like us in this House, sees this issue as one that is multi-partisan in nature. It is an issue that has to be moved upon as we get closer and closer to the 50th anniversary of the tabling the report from the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

I would love to speak with the member more on this. I welcome every colleague who cares about this issue to reach out to me. Together we can turn this into—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to build off my colleague from Shefford's comments on the national action plan for gender-based violence. The Liberal government has been talking about bringing this forward since 2015. Many groups recognize that this was an issue before COVID, but obviously, during the COVID pandemic, it has become even more of an issue. We are able to work together to quickly move on this. Groups are calling for a coherent, coordinated and well-resourced national action plan.

I would like to hear about a specific timeline and deadline for when we can expect that action plan.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, my predecessor on this file is now the Minister of Health. She was ready to move forward with the national action plan. We previously sat really close to each other in the House of Commons, so we would talk about this.

She was horrified and I was surprised that the federal government, the Government of Canada, 150 years after Confederation, did not have a coordinated plan in the House to address and prevent gender-based violence. Before we leapt to a national plan, to get support from provinces and territories, which have been the lead on this file, we had to get our house in order. That is what the federal strategy to address and prevent gender-based violence is about. We have been implementing that.

For the first time since 1998, we brought back a survey on gender-based violence. We had stopped surveying that. We were able to increase support for front-line organizations more than fivefold and, of course, we are working with the very partners my colleague referred to.

The timeline is now. The work is happening now. We are moving forward now, and we are moving forward in tandem with the work being done with the calls to justice around the MMIWG inquiry.

I want to thank my colleague for her incredible work and her advocacy. The story I shared earlier was a story that happened in her

backyard in London, and it is not a story unique to her backyard. Every two and a half days in our country, a woman is killed, not just assaulted, but killed. We have an opportunity in the wake of this awful mess that is COVID to honour the survivors who have come before us and do right by women, who clearly make our economy and our communities go round.

Enough is enough. We have an opportunity in this House of 338 members to do something.

• (1345)

The Deputy Speaker: There are many members who wish to pose questions and have comments. I appreciate that, and we need to follow the rules with respect to the time that is permitted. There is a list of no less than five members from the hon. minister's party who wish to pose questions here. We will take the first one that came up.

The hon. member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to begin by saying how proud I am to see this bill tabled in the House of Commons once again. I encourage all parties to support it, as Canadians deserve to have confidence in our justice system.

The training mentioned in the bill will be trauma-informed and includes culturally sensitive training to combat myths and stereotypes. Can the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development expand on this?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, let me first explain how we are moving forward on this issue. We have to engage men and boys. To see my male colleagues, inside and outside of the House, become part of the solution gives me hope that the length of progress moving forward will not be as painful and as slow as it has been because we have them standing with us.

I thank the hon. member, and in response to his question, let me talk about what rape culture is. Rape culture is a sociological concept for a setting in which rape is pervasive and normalized due to societal attitudes about gender and sexuality. Behaviours commonly associated with rape culture include victim blaming, slut shaming, sexual objectification, rape trivialization, denial of widespread rape, refusing to acknowledge the harm caused by sexual violence or some combination of these. It leads to a culture of impunity. The best description I have seen on how to understand rape culture is the 11th principle of consent, which shows how sexist attitudes, rape jokes and locker room banter move in severity across a spectrum and lead to the degrading and assaulting of victims and that culture of impunity. The trauma-informed and culturally sensitive training we are talking about is meant to ensure we dig deep into those norms and attitudes.

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I will wrap up with this. Yes, we need to ensure everybody gets this training, but we have an obligation and an opportunity to lead by example. My Department of Women and Gender Equality is receiving anti-oppression and anti-racism training. I think we can lead by example as parliamentarians to seek such training as other institutions also do the same.

I thank all the judges who choose this line of work. It is difficult work. We appreciate and respect them, and we look forward to continuing to strengthen our justice system with them.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful to be in this place and to talk about something that is so important. I would also like to thank the minister, because this is something I know she and I both believe in, that we need to work harder for women, especially when it comes to these horrible sexual assault cases.

I would also like to thank two other women in this House today, the critics for women and gender equality for both the NDP and the Bloc. My time working with them as the shadow minister for women and gender has been excellent. I know that when it comes to women's issues, we can work very well together.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, another member who will be working very strongly on this file.

I think we have to go back to why we need these changes in the first place. I was so proud to stand alongside Rona Ambrose, back in 2017, as she put forward Bill C-337. It was the just act, where we understood that judges need to be trained to understand what it looks like to be a victim of this horrendous crime.

We also have to talk today about what happens when there is something that is actually going against those women, and the misunderstandings of what it is as well. At the bottom of this, the survivors of sexual assault should never be afraid to come forward to the judicial system. They should never be afraid to pick up the phone and speak to law enforcement, knowing that what they are going to be bringing forward is urgent and it is necessary for it to be appropriately looked at.

There was a report back in 2014, and this was pretty much what kicked off Bill C-337. It was a report called "A Survey of Survivors of Sexual Violence From Three Canadian Cities". It was published by the Department of Justice. We look at some of these things when we talk about women. We have seen so many cases.

We have seen so many movies. I still think of the movie with Jodie Foster, back in the 1980s. At that time, because of who she was, because of the way she looked, because of her poverty levels, those things were used against her. People did not believe her. Sure, it was a story that was fictional, but it is based on so many women's lives. This is something we really need to focus on.

There are instances where victims of this horrendous crime are being judged for their personal history. I think it is really important to understand that no woman, no man, no young girl or boy ever deserves this type of treatment. We should all be treated with dignity. When we go to the courts to talk about these types of things, we should be honoured and respected.

During the survey I was referring to, the survey of survivors, there were some key elements taken from this. This is what is really important: It is about talking to the survivors. What happened to them through this judicial process? What were some of the pros and cons of it? Part of the problem that we hear about all time is that people are not going to come forward if they feel disrespected, if they feel violated once again. They are concerned about the trauma from the sexual violence, and we need to have empathetic people who are trained, such as our judges.

I am very proud of many of the police associations that have been working to make sure they understand more about domestic abuse and sexual assault so that when they are going to one of these cases, they can be empathetic. It is a very difficult time. It is hard for people who have never been part of it or have never been traumatized in this area to put themselves in those shoes. Speaking to survivors is what we need to move forward. We need to make sure that the prevalence of sexual violence is ended, and we also need to make sure that we are providing the appropriate resources for one to become healthy and whole again.

We talk about mental health and addictions all the time in this country, but we also have to understand that some of the things that lead to these addictions and mental health issues can be things such as sexual assault and what happens when we are not worrying about the people who have gone through this horrific challenge.

There is one woman who has spoken about this, and this is just a quote from the study. She indicated:

...I think they really, truly need to understand there needs to be better education on the side of law enforcement, or on the judicial side, as to why it is so under-reported; why people feel such a sense of shame; why victims will blame themselves or feel responsible...why people tend to get away with this and why people are reluctant to come forward....

● (1350)

We have heard many times, "What does the judicial system look like?" The biggest concern that I have is that being a victim of this type of crime is not like being a victim of other types of crimes. This is someone violating every bone in a person's body, and I think we need to make sure that when we are looking at these cases, we are respecting the trauma the individual has gone through. If that trauma is untreated, if that person is revictimized, we are not doing them any good. We are selling them short of a better future.

These are really concerning things for me. We look at the stereotypes and understanding the stereotypes that we have of indigenous women, women in poverty and women of colour. What happens to these women when they put themselves forward? We have heard many times that the results of these court hearings can be skewed because of the victims' personal history. This should never have been something that causes the inequality that it has.

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I can say that when I look across this room, I know that the member for London—Fanshawe and I will always fight on these things together, and that the people in London will always make sure that we have women's backs. A lot of that comes from the great leaders that we have in our communities. I can think of people like Megan Walker, whom I speak of often when it comes to the London Abused Women's Centre.

These are things that our women's facilities and organizations from across this country are fighting for. They see what happens when women have been assaulted and they see what happens when women are not believed. I think that is something we need to look at, because for me it is really important.

There are many negative impacts to a woman when she is not heard. If the judges are not going to hear her, what happens to that woman? We have to look at this. Is it a young woman who has gone to college, where we know that the sexual assault rates are extremely and extraordinarily high? What happens to her? She is a 20-year-old. What happens to her for the rest of her future if there is not a court decision or there is not the proper law enforcement to support her?

I look at some of the negative coping strategies that we talk about all the time when it comes to mental health. I look at some of the addictive behaviours. If a woman has been sexually assaulted and nobody is listening, what does she do so she can get through this trauma? We have to be aware of the addictive behaviours, when it comes to drug use and other horrific things like that. We also understand that there is a lot of self-harm that can follow sexual trauma as well. We hear a lot about cutting. We hear a lot about women and awful things that they have done, understanding that they have lost all self-confidence and that they are not whole. It is our job to make sure that these women have the opportunity to be whole again. That includes not only the proper judicial system but also the proper counselling and services in our communities to help them.

That is why, when I talk about the London Abused Women's Centre, I know that we have a great facility in our own community. I can only hope that across this country we can have these types of programs from coast to coast to coast and, for the member for Haldimand—Norfolk, to coast. We also have to understand that after this there are many suicides. Many of these people who have not been heard take their own lives, and that is just not appropriate. There is also great isolation. We have seen over the last six months what happens due to isolation. We have seen this with COVID-19. We have seen some horrific things, and we have seen many people lose their lives because of that. We also have to see the avoidance and the seeking of attention. There are so many scenarios that can happen to a woman who has not been heard.

Finally, we have to look at the unhealthy relationships, because we see this trend. Women sit back, those who have maybe not been traumatized in their lives, and they continue to wonder why women would go back to that type of relationship, but if we are not there to support them, they know no better. They do not know that there are men who are wonderful in this world, who will take their hand and walk with them and treat them exactly how they should be treated. Like I said, they should be treated like gold.

I am very fortunate, because I have that husband who stands alongside me. However, not everybody has that person in their lives, so it is really important. As the minister said, it is not just about women advocating for women, but it is also about men. I know that within this chamber I am looking at 338 members of Parliament who are all on the same side, and that is what matters here. I know that my own colleagues support me, and as a woman, that is what continues to create my confidence and continues to make me able to reach for the stars. I am so proud of the type of caucus I work with.

Today I saw in the London Free Press, one of our local newspapers, a story about a young woman who was sexually assaulted in the London East area at a bus stop. We need to make sure that we are there for that young woman who was just assaulted this morning. We need to make sure that we listen, and we need to make sure that she is able to go through the process fairly.

I thank the House for this time, and I thank all Canadians for listening.

• (1355)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. I had the opportunity to work with her on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women this summer, until Parliament was prorogued. I still think that prorogation was the wrong decision, for one, because that committee was looking into the need to examine how COVID-19 is impacting women, particularly with respect to violence.

We all seem to agree on the importance of the bill, and I was wondering why, in the previous Parliament, all parties in the House were prepared to vote in favour of Bill C-5 except the Conservatives. I wonder how my colleague might justify the fact that we are still debating a bill that seems to have unanimous support, at least in terms of its importance.

• (1400)

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, we saw some horrific stories come out of Quebec. We talked about an offender who was released from prison and that evening killed a prostitute. We know he had violence in his life. Many reports had come out, stating that this person should not be left on day parole. Unfortunately, the parole officer told this person that he could buy sex. To me, a person who had used a hammer to kill another young woman is not someone we would want on our streets. One of the things we were looking at amending was ensuring parole officers were also engaged in this process.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to especially thank the hon. member for her leadership at the Status of Women committee, both as a member of the committee and, more important, as chair of the committee, where she did tremendous work. She has now moved on and that is a real loss to that committee.

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We were both part of the committee when we originally studied this bill. We know that most sexual assault trials are held at provincial courts. I wonder if the member could comment on the importance of the federal government providing leadership on training for federally appointed judges and if she thinks it sends a message to the provinces to follow suit.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, it was wonderful working with that member on the Status of Women committee. It is a neat committee. While we do not always agree on everything, at the end of the day, we do have quite a bond. I am looking at other members on that committee as well.

This is exactly what we need to do. We need to send that signal out to the provinces. This morning I asked the Minister of Justice about a case in which intoxication became an issue and it was appealed on the basis of charter rights. At the end of the day, the perpetrator was not going to be held accountable for the sexual assault.

There are great challenges and concerns. Any person who is dealing with cases of trauma should have this type of training. Regardless of whether it is sexual assault, family abuse or any of those things, there needs to be that empathetic training. We need to ensure we provide all of those resources and tools. This is about compassion.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Elgin—Middlesex—London has been a wonderful partner in our area and has advocated for women. I will miss her at the Status of Women committee, but I hope we will continue to look at the incredible problems women are facing right now.

The member spoke a lot about women's voices being heard and having somebody to turn to. I think about the incredible organizations in our city of London. She mentioned the London Abused Women's Centre. There are places like Anova, My Sister's Place and the YWCA. They have been struggling throughout COVID, but these are the organizations women turn to have their voices heard.

Something that I have been pushing for, and I know these women's organizations have been pushing for this as well, is a commitment from the government for long-term, stable core funding. I would love to hear the member's response to that.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, this is probably one of the most challenging things I have been asked because I believe in the different roles of the federal government and provincial governments, so it is really hard for me. At the same time, I understand the necessity of these programs. I understand that if these programs do not have the operating dollars, it causes problems for our communities. Although I believe in the constitutional roles of the federal and provincial government, part of my heart will always be there for women's organizations.

Therefore, we need to continue to ensure they have all of the necessary supports. Whether it is to ensure the social transfers are earmarked for these types of these things, whether it is shelters or counselling, we need to ensure we do better.

• (1405)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today on the traditional territory of the Algo-

nquin nation. I again say *meegwetch* for their enormous hospitality and patience.

We are debating today a very important bill that has been before us previously. It was before us with its previous title as a private member's bill, Bill C-337, in the previous Parliament. Of course, that bill died on the Order Paper, but not for lack of support in this place. It was in the other place that it got bogged down for three years. The author of this private member's bill, whose name I can say because she is no longer in Parliament, was Rona Ambrose. She played many distinguished roles in the cabinet of the previous Conservative government and, ultimately, when she brought this bill forward, was interim leader of the Conservative Party.

I think it was Rona herself who said that the problem in the other place was a bunch of old white boys. That is kind of the problem with the people on the bench, too. We have a significant problem in that the cultural demographic most likely to sit in judgment in sexual assault cases is exactly the demographic least likely to understand the issues. One must never slur old white men, I sometimes say with tongue in cheek, but I just married one, so I really have nothing against old white men. I love one in particular a tremendous amount. However, he would be the first to say that in his generation, that group has privilege that comes from three things: being male, being white and being presumed to be somebody really special.

Most judges are fantastic human beings. I just mentioned my husband, John Kidder. His grandfather was the chief justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, so he certainly would not have said anything other than wonderful things about his own grandfather. However, I used to practise law, and when taking a case to court, I had to hope I would get a good judge.

I had a really awful judge once. I was not even called to the bar yet when I went to court as both plaintiff and lawyer with a group of Cape Bretoners trying to stop the aerial spraying of Agent Orange on all of us. This was in 1982. The government of the day had approved aerial spraying of Agent Orange over Nova Scotians. We managed to fight it enough that they changed it to spraying from the ground, and then we went to court. It was a class action. My family lost all of its land in a bill of costs to Scott Paper.

It was a very ugly case, a one-year-long trial from beginning to end. For the actual court case, we were before the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia for a full month making the case that Agent Orange had caused damage, birth defects and cancer in Vietnam and had been found in groundwater. It was a long, complicated case. The judge we had, in his first big case, ruled that Agent Orange was safe and that we were actually bad people for bothering the Nova Scotia government with our complaints.

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I mention this because the very next big case this judge got was a sexual assault case. Once again his words made headlines. He did find the assailant guilty of sexual assault, but the penalty was basically a slap on the wrist because, as he said from the bench, it was not a particularly violent rape. The assailant, found guilty of rape, was not really punishable because he had not used a lot of violence.

I searched for the name of this case. We know the name of the judge; he has been referenced frequently in debate today. He said to the victim, "Why couldn't you just keep your knees together?" and suggested the victim's attempts to fight off her assailant had been feeble. The judge chose not to believe the victim and the assailant was initially acquitted. That case was in 2016. Our ability to find things through search engines is pretty good for recent history, so we know it was Justice Robin Camp. It was a Calgary case. I do not think it is a stretch to say that this led quite directly to the Hon. Rona Ambrose bringing forward, as a private member's bill, that judges needed training.

• (1410)

The case I referenced was not a particularly violent rape. If I could get to a law library I know I would find it, because it is in the Nova Scotia reported cases from around 1984. When I did a search, I discovered that the judge had passed in May of this year, and there were nothing but laudatory obituaries for the sterling character of the judge who found that Agent Orange was safe and that the victim in this matter did not really deserve justice because the rape had not been sufficiently violent. I will not mention his name out of respect for the dead.

There are judges out there who need more than training, and we need this piece of legislation to pass. We know that there is more at stake here to get justice for women who experience sexual violence. We know that critical recommendation after critical recommendation in the Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has not yet had any official government response. That report says specifically that when an indigenous woman has been the victim of sexual violence, she must have access to culturally appropriate and sensitive physical help and psychological support. She must have help with retaining evidence, as well as help from a health professional who is indigenous herself, who can assist a victim and get justice and get through the next stage: what do police do.

Moments ago, the Minister for Women and Gender Equality made the case that quite often it is the police who say they do not find sufficient evidence, so there is the notion of a pile of unfounded cases. We know that very few women who are sexually assaulted actually report the assault. Within that group a great number of people are not believed, and the cases pile up in the unfounded category. When a case finally gets to court, we need to know the judge understands enough about sexual assault to not believe something silly like if they had been a victim of rape they would not have been silent about it for so long. Really, what do the judges know about it? They need education.

This bill is urgently needed. There is widespread support. As mentioned, it passed in this place very quickly when it was first brought forward in 2017. Then it got stuck in the other place and died on the Order Paper prorogation. I commend the government

for bringing it back as a government bill. Obviously it will be passed much more quickly as a government bill than if we were to wait to see who would bring it forward as a private member's bill.

I also appreciate the changes that were made to expand the notion of education for judges from questions of sexual assault law to include something which, in Bill C-3, is referred to as the social context. I know that many members of this place would like to see social context further amended to make it clear that we are talking about things like systemic racism, intersectionality, poverty, assumptions that are made about sex trade workers, assumptions that are made about the marginalized, and assumptions that are inherently discriminatory toward women.

In looking at the social context piece, I know there will be some desire to amend the bill to bring it into a fuller understanding so that we could actually use this legislation to deal with issues with which we are now far more seized: questions of, for example, systemic racism in police forces and systemic racism on the benches of our courts. We can maybe deal with more issues with amendments.

To make sure I do not run out of time, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to a proposed motion that I hope will be acceptable to all members in this place. If you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent to speed up this bill to help us get it to committee faster and skip the second reading stage.

It would read: "That notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, at the conclusion of Government Orders today, or when no member rises in debate, whichever is earlier, the Speaker shall forthwith put successfully all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of Bill C-3, an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, provided that if a recorded division is requested, it shall be deferred until Monday, October 5, 2020, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions."

I hope this motion is in its proper form. The clerks have it. I apologize to the other side of the House because normally I would run around and speak to each member personally. I relied on getting it to members electronically.

• (1415)

Mr. Speaker, if you seek it I hope you will find unanimous consent to move Bill C-3 immediately to committee and skip second reading stage, with the possibility for a vote on Monday should other parties require it.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Following up on the motion by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, I hope that all parties can find a way to reach agreement on Monday and get this bill to committee. We need to get the committee work started on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: I do not believe that falls under a point of order.

We will now go to questions and comments. The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her speech.

Does she think women who were victims of rape are being given enough credibility? According to what the minister said, police officers are the first ones in charge of deciding whether the women's statements are credible.

Does she believe it is okay to wait until the matter is before a judge?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Trois-Rivières for her question.

From what I understand, her question had to do with the credibility of women who are raped, and, in particular, sex workers. Sex workers have the same rights as all other women, including the right to protect themselves against violence and sexual assault.

I think it is also a matter of educating and training people. We are talking about police officers, judges, lawyers and, especially, men in our society. Men are also our colleagues. You do not have to be a woman to be a feminist. There are men who believe it is important to defend women's rights.

It is awful, but it is well known that men do not always believe victims, especially when the victim is a sex worker.

[*English*]

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always listen with great fascination to my colleague from the Green Party. She always presents her points with compassion and the utmost consideration of all factors involved.

I would like to ask the member two questions. Does she believe that more females need to be in the judiciary, as well as more females with diverse backgrounds? She spoke about indigenous cultures being part of the justice system and that when it comes time to making decisions and listening to these victims, there has to be a cultural sensitivity. Does she agree there is not only an appalling lack of female representation on the bench but also ethno-culturally diverse female representation, and that including more of both would help in some cases? Also, can the member speak more to the urgency of why we should only have first reading of the bill?

• (1420)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, if it were not for COVID, I would be sitting closer to my dear colleague. Our assigned seats allowed me to have frequent conversations with the member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle.

I would absolutely agree that the demographics of the bench are pale, male and stale. It is just what it is.

I became a lawyer in 1983, and when I started law school, one-third of the class was women, and that was a big change. One of my friends, Anne Derrick, is a trail-blazing activist lawyer. She is now sitting on the bench in the Nova Scotia Supreme Court, and she is fantastic. So there are changes happening. However, diversity in ethnicity, diversity in religious and cultural backgrounds, as well as indigenous lawyers and judges, are desperately needed, as are indigenous-led police forces that have the trust of a community because they have the community's back.

To the second question from my hon. colleague, we need to get this bill through speedily. There have been far too many delays in the last Parliament, and I hope that all parties can find a way to advance the bill without having to repeat all the steps that we did in the last Parliament and have the unanimous support that the bill enjoyed.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, I will let him know that there are only about nine minutes remaining, and not the full 10 minutes that he would usually get. We are coming close to the end of Government Orders today. I will give him the signal in the usual way as we get close to that time.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville, and I will be brief, having participated all day in this debate.

This bill would do four significant things. It would restrict eligibility for judicial appointments to those candidates for the Superior Court who will undertake to participate in continuing education; have curriculum set on sexual assault law and social context in consultation with groups and organizations, and judges would set that curriculum; have judges, through the National Judicial Institute and the Canadian Judicial Council, provide to the minister an annual report to be tabled in Parliament about the seminars that have been provided and the number of people who had attended; and have judges be required to provide reasons to ensure transparency and confidence in the administration of justice with respect to sexual assault law.

Government Orders

Actually, that is all I need to say. We know that this bill started with Rona Ambrose from the other side of the aisle. It is something that the government supports, and I believe it is something that the Conservatives and all parties in this House support. If no one else stands at this point, we could have this moved to a vote on Monday and passed after Question Period, which is what I think we should do now.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recognize the member has a lot of experience, not only with the bill before us, but also in his private life when he was dealing with files.

As I indicated today, there were some awful things that happened in Toronto when it came to decisions at the provincial court involving intoxication, and I would like the member's insight on that. How do we, as a federal government, lead when we see this happening to women? If intoxication can be used as part of a defence, what happens next?

When we look at sexual assault, especially with our youth in university and college, the numbers are profound. We see huge numbers in that 18- to 20-year-old age category. I am just wondering what we can do to make sure that we not only have leadership here but also have leadership throughout the country. How we can help protect young women and girls?

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, the member has raised this question at different points in the debate today, and it is an important point. Ensuring our court system is hospitable to those who come before it is critical in terms of the administration of justice, credibility and confidence in the administration of justice. Nowhere is this more acute than in the context of a survivor of sexual assault.

The situation the member raises, as the minister outlined earlier today, is something that touches on provincial responsibility for the administration of justice. The issue of how that case proceeds and the appeals that follow therefrom are the purview of the provincial attorney general in that case. It is something that we are following closely as we work collaboratively with all parties in this House toward ensuring a hospitable and sensitized court environment for sexual assault survivors, among many others.

• (1425)

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Rona Ambrose, as those in the House will well know, is very special. I am so glad she brought this bill forward. It has been delayed a lot, and we will see what happens in the coming weeks, days or hours.

I am extremely worried about the indigenous community, particularly women and girls who often do not get a second chance. I wonder if we have looked at this bill closely enough. I talked to our attorney general in Saskatchewan, because Saskatchewan, like P.E.I., really endorses the bill, but we have issues on the indigenous side of it.

Women and girls in that community often do not get the second chances. Have we done enough consultation with the indigenous communities on the bill?

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, frankly, I share the member's concern with respect to the impacts of the bill and how we could start

to address the very acute needs of those who are in our criminal justice system, as complainants in this context, particularly indigenous women. That was a subject of some interventions I made with respect to how this dovetailed with what we found with the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls inquiry, which shows that sexual violence is disproportionately large against indigenous women. It is something we are cognizant of in Saskatchewan and across the country.

Have consultations occurred? Yes, they have. The position on this side of the House is that we should get this back into committee as fast as possible so any further fine tuning with respect to the concerns he rightfully raises can be made with proposed amendments at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls calls to justice notes that apathy from police forces is also indicative of ongoing colonial violence, racism and sexism, re-victimizing indigenous women, girls and two-spirited peoples.

Will the Liberals commit to also extending the proposed sexual assault and social context to police services? This certainly needs to be looked at and I hope the government will consider it right now in light of the conversation we have been having in Canada. I hope I get a response.

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, as a procedural matter, that proposal, as valid as it is, would be beyond the scope of this bill, which is targeting judges. There is a lot of validity in what he has raised. I point him to the fact that the Minister of Public Safety's mandate letter talks about the need for cultural competency and unconscious bias training for law enforcement agents. Should that type of training be occurring with our federally regulated law enforcement officials? Absolutely, it should. As the MMIWG rightfully identified, this is part of the problem with systemic racism and discrimination against indigenous communities.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to put a few words on the record about this very important legislation, which really means a lot to the women in the country and sets an example for the world on what we should be doing to train our judges.

I want to congratulate Rona Ambrose, who is a personal hero of mine. It fills me with a lot of pride to know this is a Conservative initiative. This change will benefit so many women for generations to come.

I also believe the training should be beyond judges. We should be educating young men as well. This is not solely an issue with judges, this is something of which all Canadians should be made aware.

For example, I have always been a strong-willed person, but when I was growing up, I was not necessarily aware of what my rights were. Now any man who wanted to take advantage of me, or say anything inappropriate, or touch me inappropriately or whatever might have been done in college or at a party, which I have seen countless times, would rue the day they would dare do that.

However, when I was younger, I did not necessarily understand that I could say no, that it was unacceptable. That education is really important for women and men, the education that they have rights, that they have the right to consent and that when it is no, it is no. This proposed legislation ensures there is a greater conversation in Canada about the right to consent, and the education for judges is just the beginning for this conversation.

Government Orders

I am very much looking forward to seeing what the developments will be in the coming years.

● (1430)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul will have eight and a half minutes remaining in her time when the House next gets back to debate on the question.

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

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

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